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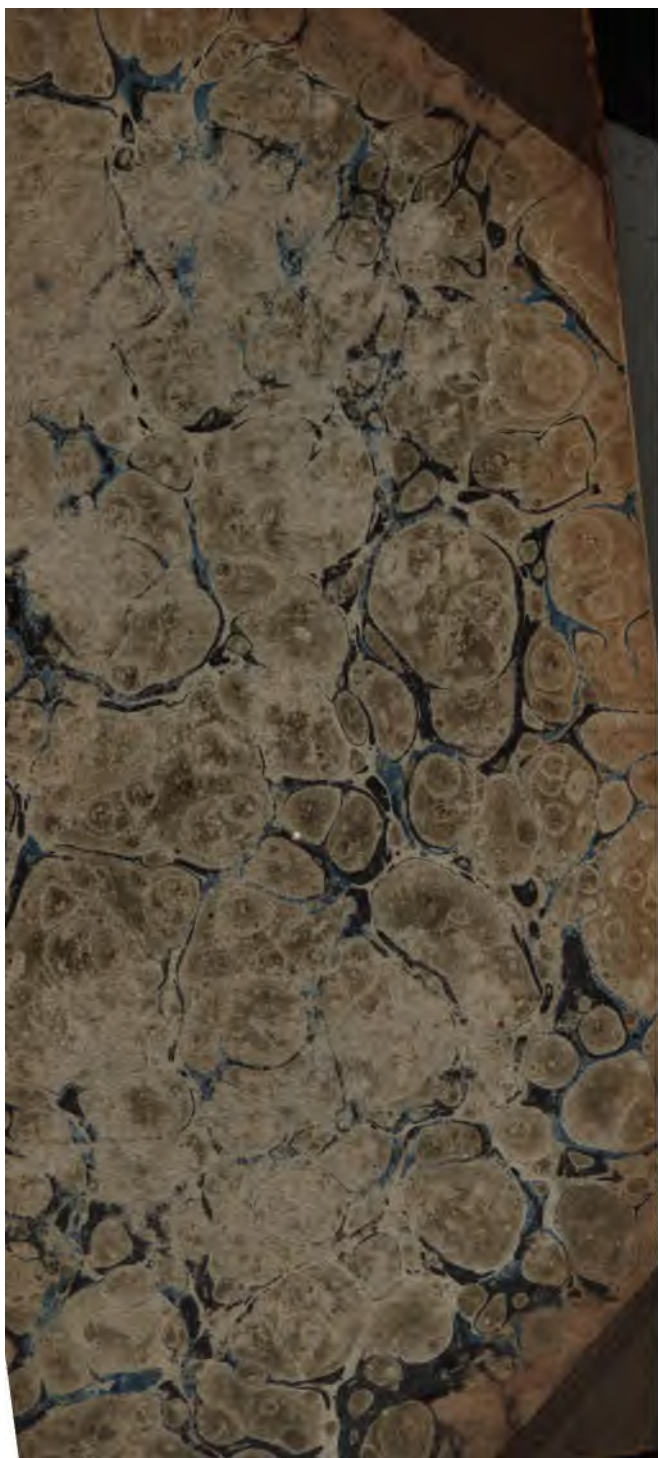
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ALLA GIORNATA.

VOL. II.

LONDON

PRINTED BY S. AND R. BENTLEY, DORSET STREET.

"ALLA GIORNATA;"

OR,

TO THE DAY.

" When I go musing all alone,
Thinking of divers things foreknown;
When I build castles in the air,
Void of sorrow, and void of fear,
Pleasing myself with phantasms sweet,
Methinks the time runs very fleet.

Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, CONDUIT STREET.
1826.

188.



CHAPTER I.

THE MEETING OF THE PARTED CHILDREN.

There is a feeling in the heart
Of woman, which can have no part
In man ; a self devotedness,
As victims round their idols press,
And asking nothing, but to show
How far their zeal and faith can go.

• • • • •
Hopeless often when most fond,
Without hope or fear beyond
Its own pale fidelity ;—
And this woman's love can be.

The Troubadour, by L. E. L.

MANY anxious days rolled heavily on. The Gherardesca attempted in vain to foresee what the decision of the magistrates upon the late

event would be. She was strongly recommended by her best counsellors, Cassini and Fredolfo, to forbear from all apparent interference in the cause whatever; but they promised to give her every information in their power respecting the friend concerning whom she was so deeply interested.

“Your taking any active part in this stage of the business,” they urged, “might only tend to exasperate the opposite party, and could not serve Ranieri.”

The certainty of his personal safety was for the moment a great consolation, but her mind still continued to be agitated by the dread of being parted from him. One, or both, of the actors in this late affair, she thought, must in all probability, according to the rigid laws of the state, be banished Pisa; such penalty she conceived was the slightest punishment that could be awarded: and what would be her wretchedness if thus the first object which

made life valuable was lost to her! Another subject of mingled sorrow and indignation occurred in the public affront she had received from Ermenegilda, who pronounced unequivocally that the present catastrophe arose entirely from the insatiable vanity of Gherardesca: by whom (as the Lanfreducci believed) the hopes of both these cavalieres had been encouraged; until, roused by mutual jealousy, their animosity had shown itself in the indulgence of revenge upon each other.

Ildegarda could, indeed, by a word have shamed the author of such misrepresentation, but she was too proud to humble herself by explanation before the woman who thus wrongfully accused her; her ambition was of a far nobler nature, than that puerile feminine gratification of vanity ascribed to her by Ermenegilda; but such an accusation, proceeding from such a source, inflicted a wound which preyed heavily on Ildegarda's feelings. Rachaela's

mind, too, became infected with her mistress's distress; and as that evil is always the greatest, of which the real and possible extent is unknown; so to this damsel the apprehension of something more terrible than she could actually embody in language, laid hold upon her, and the same aberration of mind from which she had so recently recovered, seemed again to have returned. In truth, there was a gloom spread through Pisa, well calculated to affect a vivid imagination: people went about the daily affairs of life more resembling automaton, impelled by machinery, than like living breathing beings, acting and moving by volition: they looked significantly at each other, shrugged their shoulders, shook their heads, and without coming to any explanation, passed each other in the streets, forbearing further communication than the interchange of doubtful gestures. Such portentous silence, such implied terror of unknown evil, was but too well cal-

culated to take effect on the temperament of Rachaela, and she secretly framed a scheme, which she imparted to Radegonda only; and with that combination of contrivance, so peculiarly the characteristic of persons on the verge of insanity, had no sooner formed, than she executed it with all the dexterity and secresy imaginable.

Ranieri, who had been suffered to remain within the precincts of his palace, was now perfectly recovered, and had quietly returned to his usual occupations and mode of life. And in all, save the privation of beholding Ildegarda, declared to Cassini he had never felt more perfect contentment.

“The certainty that I am circumscribed in space, and of necessity obliged to seek resource in myself, and my own home, for entertainment, has compelled me to the task, and I have found my reward. How often we pursue happiness afar, when true happiness is around our

footsteps, courting our embraces ; but we set it aside, and heedlessly follow a deceptive illusion.

It was thus the Lanfreducci discoursed with Cassini as he mused in his garden, enjoying the cool evening hour, and attentively delighting his estimable friend with the music of his lute, and the soothing converse of his harmonious spirit. They were seated in one of those decorated alcoves which the Italians are fond of erecting at the corner of their gardens, to combine a view of the passers-by with a view of the adjacent scenery. And the objects before them were well adapted to tranquillize the mind—the character of the place was one of serenity, and the season added to its pensive charm. A flood of moonlight scintillated upon the dancing Arno; and as Ranieri fixed his eyes upon it, he exclaimed, “How like to pleasure are those silvery beams, still eluding the touch—still alluring the sight !”

“Why,” said Cassini, smiling, “does all the

wisdom of Nature not make us wise? and why do we theoretically receive and dwell upon the lesson, yet practically disdain its use?"

"Ah! I know what you would have me understand to be implied in those words; but, Cassini, I profess to think that which you deem folly is wisdom. To love Ildegarda, even without hope, is a sufficient impulse to ennoble my existence; 'tis true Montescudajo, too, loves her, and I can forgive him all things for that very reason; but he does not love her as she deserves to be loved—not with that pure affection which seeks the welfare of the object rather than its own gratification. Oh! no, he would obtain, and then scorn her: how different that selfish sentiment from mine! (so thinks every true votary of the passion;) his love, what is it?—mere ambition. Oh! Cassini, it is not her wealth, her power, or even her charm, which has subdued and bound me to her for life."

He might have continued, it is difficult to say

how long, in this strain, for it is sweet to hear our own resolutions when they are the echo of love ; but his speech was interrupted by some sounds struck, as it seemed, from the chords of a lute, immediately beneath the terrace of his garden.

“Did you not hear a voice?—hush !”—and they both listened ;—the sounds were repeated, and in that peculiar manner which is so well suited to attract attention : he leaned over the balustrade of the terrace, and, in the broad clear moonlight, beheld a muffled figure, who, on seeing itself observed, glided away with noiseless step in the shadow of the building, and then, in a low distinct recitative, chanted the following words :—

I come with gentle message fraught,
Lend me thy gracious ear ;
A spell of magic power I've brought,
And one to thee most dear ;
But like the moon-beam I must be,
A guest that enters silently.

And like that moon-beam purely bright,
 All mortal touch I fly ;
 He who should once this mandate slight,
 No more shall me espy ;
 For like yon moon-beam I must be,
 Received as light of purity.

And welcom'd I must be, as one
 Who gracious tidings brings,
 Discreetly, gently gazed upon,
 Like bird on timid wings ;
 For should I rudely treated be,
 I'd fly such presence instantly.

No threats or chains can me secure,
 A subtle spirit I ;
 Nor questions ought will I endure
 From tongue beneath the sky ;
 Yet I can tell thee gentler things
 Than burthen'd ere young zephyr's wings.

Command thy menial tribe away,
 Thy gates unbarr'd to be,
 And close the lattice, whence the ray
 May fall more veiled in mystery ;
 For if my secret you would win,
 Submission must your task begin.

The singer ceased, as if awaiting an answer.

“ This is no common strain,” said Cassini ;
“ the intonation of the voice tells of something
more deeply real than song.”

Lanfreducci had not time to comment upon
the matter, or to consult prudence.

“ Be it the messenger of good or evil, I must
reply, for it is a woman’s voice, and that is
irresistible to me, and shall never plead to be
heard in vain.” So saying, he snatched up his
lute; and thus, in that language which so read-
ily evolves itself into music and rhyme, he
answered :—

If thou art what thou dost seem,
Gentle, kind, and good and fair ;
Tell me that I do not dream,
Be ’st thou spirit of the air,
Or water nymph, or woodland child,
Give me some boon or token rare,
I ’m not by fancy quite beguiled,
And that it is indeed for me,
That sounds thy witching minstrelsy ?

To which the minstrel rejoined,—

Thou wouldst a token,—

Take it then,

Most incredulous of men ;

The wound that pierced in battle fray,

Is slight to that of heart that's broken :

For lady's love, the wise ones say,

Will make the stoutest pine away.

And such I know to be thy case :

Now wilt thou deign accept solace ?

Since I have told thee that I know

The real cause of all thy woe.

I ask thee once, I ask thee twice,

But should I vainly ask thee thrice ;

Farewell, most obstinate, I go—

But whither—thou shalt never know.

“ Dear Signor,” said Cassini, “ at this moment all secret communication is dangerous ;—the eyes of the Anziani are vigilant : postpone, at least, the reception of this stranger ;—there may be unknown mischief at work.”

“ Impossible ! ” rejoined his companion ; “ I must give audience to this female, whoever she may be, immediately.”

“ Oh ! the misfortunes of youth,” cried Cassini, shrugging his shoulders ; “ but it is in vain to expect any thing so out of season, as experience from a juvenile mind,—imprudences ‘ *son frutti della stagione.*’ The safest thing I can do, for your sake, is to be able to swear that I know nothing of the transaction ; so, farewell : be cautious at least, and retire within the doors of your palace ; but here, in this garden, open to the eyes and ears of all passengers—be not so very unwise, as, at this time, to entertain a stranger.”

Having thus spoken, he took his leave ; and Ranieri, looking again over the balcony, saw the figure gliding away, but apparently with slow, unwilling step.

“ Hist ! hist ! thou art obeyed, mysterious stranger, and I go where I may receive you according to your own directions. Be in the *portone* of the palace, and I shall await your commands. Ho ! Vincenzo ! methinks ’tis cold ;

prepare lights; I return to my chamber, and here—close the lattices of the windows; but open the door to the street, that the house may not be too hot.”

“ It blows hot and cold in a breath,” said Vincenzo, muttering to himself as his master hurried past him; “ but I’ll know what witch is in the wind, in spite of all this contrivance.” Having obeyed Signor Lanfreducci’s orders, he disposed himself commodiously at the key-hole of the principal door of entrance, from whence he could distinguish every thing in the interior of the apartment, as distinctly as though he had been present. A figure entered, but, except that from its size it seemed to be that of a female, it was impossible to say of what age or appearance. It groped under its garment, as if to disengage something concealed there, and having drawn forth a letter and a silken scarf, presented them to Ranieri; then passed away with such noiseless celerity through

an opposite door, that the whole transaction did not occupy a minute: Lanfreducci, by his gestures, supplicated it to remain, but it was already gone.

Yielding to his first impulse of curiosity and impatience, Ranieri called "Vincenzo!" "*Eccomi Eccellenza*," was the swift reply; but when he stood before his master, the latter knew not what to say or what to order.

"Begone!" cried Ranieri, in rougher tone than he was ever wont to address an inferior in; "I did not call, or if I did, it was a mistake."

"Well," thought the domestic, "since I am not to be confided in, I will turn my discovery to some account in another way;" and from that moment Ranieri had a dangerous inmate in his family. How much the great mistake, when they fancy themselves independent of their inferiors! If the truly noble and upright are liable to the misconceptions and malice of their servants, in what a predicament do the in-

triguing and vicious stand? Ranieri being once more alone, hastened to open his letter; and while he is perusing it, we will follow Rachella's footsteps, for already has it been guessed she was the stranger.

No sooner had she left the Lanfredotti palace, than, hurrying down a bye lane that leads to what is now the Piazza dei Cavalieri, but which then was the palace of the Anziani, she beheld a sort of pile of human creatures, crouching on the steps of a door, heaped one above another, fast asleep; but so sound asleep, on their stony pavement, that few of those who lie on down, know so profound or sweet a slumber.

"He whom I seek must be one of these," thought she; "for it was just thus that his bed and bedchamber were described to me. Hist! hist! awake!" pushing the topmost of the group with all her force to awaken him, but it was some time before she could effect her purpose;

at length he whom she roused jumped up, rubbed his eyes, and with a very sleepy "*che moi?*" gave no symptoms of being ready to execute any active commission.

"I have need of the services of Buonajuto," said Rachaella;—"art thou he?"

"And no other," was the rapid prompt reply.

"Here then, here is gold, (presenting him a purse) come with me away from these thy companions, and I will explain the nature of the service I require of thee."

"Before I take thy gold I must know what it is thou wantest of me; and if I choose to fulfil thy bidding, and execute my task to thy heart's content, thou shalt pay me and not else; but if I like not the business, good night, and away with you; for then I must go to sleep again, and thy secret is as safe with Buonajuto as the three stones whereon he lies."

"Fear not!" rejoined Rachaella, "I have no wicked design in view."

“ Well, it may be so, and I am inclined to believe thee, for I like thy voice; it is soft and sweet, and reminds me of a loved one’s—but appearances are deceitful—so, to thy tale—speak.”

“ I want to convey a letter to the Conte di Montescudajo, in such a secret manner that he himself shall not be able to ascertain by what means, or by whom, it is given him. If thou wilt aid me in this my design, I promise to do great things for thee. Art thou now willing to grant me thine aid?”

“ When I know the purport of thy letter.”

“ It is to threaten him, in case he does not use all his influence with his relations, the Anziani, to prove the Signor Lanfreducci’s innocence in the late affray, with certain death.”

Buonajuto laughed.—“ You forget that he cannot do this in the way you want him, since the innocence of Ranieri proves his own guilt; neither would he fear the vague threats of an unknown person; but I thoroughly comprehend

what you would have done ; leave the matter to me, and I will arrange it better than you can do ; only submit to follow my directions."

During this conversation they had sauntered slowly on, and reached the Church of the Santa Caterina.

" Sit down on these steps till I consider for a moment what course to take."

And now, placing his head between his hands, he remained buried, during some minutes, in deep thought.

" I have it !" he exclaimed, jumping up with an air of triumph ; " we must obtain admittance to the Palazzo Lanfreducci, by means which I shall devise. You must enact the part of a poor starving *zingara*, and I must be your son : remember, not a morsel of food have we tasted for two days, and remember, also, that your father and husband were killed in the last skirmish with the Florentines ; but your present disguise (for I see it is one) will not serve you

in good stead : wait here till I bring you a more fitting dress for the occasion."

And thus having said, with a suppleness of joint almost incredible, away he went rolling from his hands to his feet with the velocity of a carriage-wheel when the horses are at full speed. During Buonajuto's absence, Rachaela felt, for the first time, a tremor approaching to repentance, that she had ever ventured upon this wild scheme ; but the idea, that through her means Ranieri's life might be saved, gave her new energy ; and being convinced that he was in the most imminent danger, though how or why she did not know, since he had not been the aggressor but the sufferer in the late contest ; she again recalled all her courage to act as it seemed to her for the best on this trying occasion. Before she had time to repent a second time her swift messenger returned.

"*Ecco la roba !*" he cried, tossing down a parcel of tattered garments, "*Guardami bene,*

di capo in piedi, e vedi se trovi difetto in me?"

at the same time twisting one of his eyes almost out of its socket, while the other remained immovable, and jutting forth one leg covered with bandages, and tied to a stick. Rachaela laughed delightedly—at her happy age every thing becomes amusement.

“*Basta così*; this will not do—lose no time—haste to your toilette;”—when screening her behind some scaffolding that was placed for a reparation of a part of the church, to avoid the observation of any chance passenger: “Here, quick, quick, we must not laugh till all be done,” and he proceeded to disencumber her of the long thick garment in which she was enveloped, and put on her a petticoat which scarcely reached her ancle. “*Che bella Gonella!*” then seizing a mass of rags, and a species of iron stays that projected immensely at top, such as the *contadinas* wore, he fastened them round her body, and repeated all the while, with

mock gravity, "*Con permesso!*" but when he looked down and beheld her delicate small feet, he shook his head, saying with a sigh, "*Questi non son a nostro uso* ; what shall we do with these?—they must be concealed ;" and immediately began to wind long strips of cloth around her, till he made them as large as her body ; and scarcely could she use them at all for the weight with which he loaded them, not attending to her inconvenience and remonstrances. He finished his work to his own content, and putting a staff in her hand, said, "*Ora va bene camina !—ed io povero cieco,*" again twisting his eye-balls about—"I must depend upon you to lead me, for I cannot see light from dark : " so saying, he laid hold of her arm, and away they went. Many was the groan Rachaela gave ere they reached their destination, the Palazzo Lanfreducci being at the very opposite part of the town ; and the manner in which her feet had been enveloped, rendering it very difficult for

her to walk. At length, however, Buonajuto whispered "*Eccoci giunti.*"

"And what is now to be done?" questioned Rachaela, in a tone of despair, on looking up at the strong high-grated windows.

"*Urlare,*" was the reply; "*con permesso,*" again whispered the familiar, as he drew her gently down by his side on the pavement, and leaned his head on her knees, "*Ora piangeremo;*" then from the lowest moan to the highest shrieking treble of agony, such as an Italian mendicant alone knows how to perform, did he play his part in this concert, and calling every now and then, in a voice of thunder, "*Povero cieco! povero stroppiato! per la misericordia della Madonna dateci quattrini—*"

"Hush!" said Rachaela, "name not holy names."

"Bah!" rejoined her companion, "why not? we are not doing any harm."

"I hope not."

And again the shrill pipe of Buonajuto took up the leading note. This music continued some time in vain; at length, a *persiana* was opened with a crash, and a pampered menial commanded the vagabonds to be gone, and not disturb the rest of the *padrone di casa*, or they should be flung in the Arno to feed the fishes.

Here Buonajuto, with a volubility of words as wonderful as was his talent of howling, poured forth a piteous tale, which he besought his dear Messer Pranzetti to listen to, telling him at the same time to choose a number for the lottery, which he affirmed was to be found under the sign of the *Piedocchi*, in the *Giuoco del Lotto*, which number he swore Santo Ranieri had imparted to him, would infallibly gain five hundred scudi at the next month's drawing, provided only that Pranzetti could obtain leave for him, and his mother, to pass the night in the *credenza* of the palace.

“ *Quanto ci guadagnerò?*” asked the cre-

dulous Pranzetti, holding the *persiana* half closed?

“*Cercate nel Giuoco del Lotto,*” rejoined Buonajuto, knowing he could not read, and thinking it best to assume an air of command.

“*Birbone!*” bawled the servant; “if thou dost not instantly give me some token that thou wilt make good thy words, I will break every bone in thy brown skin for having awoke me.” So saying, he left the window, to descend and put this threat into execution.

“*Presto! presto! dei paoli,*” cried Buonajuto, seizing a handful from Rachaela; and, running to a stone, he deposited them beneath it; then as quickly retired; and had just replaced himself in his former position when Pranzetti arrived with a long pole, to drive them away.

“Oh! Messer Pranzetti, *caro Signor,*” reiterated Buonajuto, in the most humble whining voice; “you know my mother is a *zingara* of great skill, and in proof of what I have predicted

to you, I, who cannot command a *quattrino* to save myself from perishing, I can tell you, *caro*, that if you will only go to yonder stone, you will find an earnest of the fortune which awaits you; and provided you do but hearken to my entreaties, and allow my poor dying mother to have a drop of *rosoglio* to make her spirit go *al altra vita colle altre anime sante dal purgatorio*, your fortune is made for ever."

The credulous greedy Pranzetti, keeping his eye on the speaker, and all the while brandishing the pole, to the terror of the trembling Racharella, proceeded to the miraculous stone, and having actually found the *paoli*, he began, with frantic delight, to kiss the money; then ran and embraced Buonajuto, and again back to the money, counting it over and over, and chinking it against the pavement to ascertain that it was, in good truth, silver.

"*Caro amico*," to Buonajuto, "what can I do to serve you?"

“Oh! let me only be allowed to go to the *credenza* and have a *boccone di frittura*.”

“*Sicuro, sicuro*,” nodded Pranzetti. Buonajuto, to carry on the plot, now begged him to help his mother to rise, as she was a *povera stropicciata*, and he a *povero cieco*, never forgetting to play off his one eye, while he held the other fixed like a sightless ball.

Pranzetti conducted his guests into a large comfortable *credenza*, smelling most deliciously of fried fish and garlic. These delicate cates were quickly placed before them, and Buonajuto made such excellent use of his time, that Rachaela began to fear he had wholly forgotten the purpose for which they came there.

“Now,” said Pranzetti, whose patience was nearly exhausted, “methinks you have eaten enough; it is time that you show me what numbers answer to Piedocchi in the *Giuoco de Lotto*: make haste, lest any of my companions

come in; I cannot read, and, doubtless, you know all things."

"Ah! *caro Signor*, please to remember I am a *povero miserabile cieco!* but my mother here, she indeed can read, and do every thing else; and if you will bring us the book—" (tossing down the last of a flask of *aleatico* and assuming an air of consequence,) — "if you will bring us the *Giuoco del Lotto sarà servita* instantly; though, if you choose, I can tell you what you want to know just as well without it."

"Can you, indeed? wonderful!" said Pranzetti:—nevertheless, he went in quest of the painted board containing the rules for the lottery.

"But where is all this to end?" questioned Rachaela, in his absence.

"*Ci vuol pazienza—zitto, zitto.* You must tell Pranzetti, on his return, that you foresee

“Eh! *Santa Maria*,” cried Pranzetti, his hair standing on end with amazement; “and so it does. But if the *Padrone* awakes?”

“Leave that to me,” rejoined Buonajuto. “He will not dare to say one word, I promise you; I have a secret to keep him quiet. *Tutto va bene, tutto va bene*; and I myself, added Pranzetti, could tell him you were my poor cousin Jacopo, who comes here very often to touch the saint’s great toe.”

“It shall be done, *Signor mio*: follow me;” and seizing the brass lamp, he went flaring it along the walls of the beautifully painted staircase, repeating all the way “*cinquante cento scudi*.”

“But you have not told me the number yet; you must not forget to tell me the number.”

“Hush! here we are at last,” taking down the iron bar from the door, which served as

lock and latch, and immediately giving Buonajuto admission to the chamber.

“ Pray hard,” he said, whispering in his ear.

“ Never fear, never fear, only do you begone,” rejoined Buonajuto ; “ for it is positively necessary that you should remain below stairs with my mother.” So saying, he took the lamp from his hand, and signed to him to return, with a gesture of command.

“ But how will you find your way down again, blind as you are ? and of what use is the lamp to you ?”

“ *Sciocco !* what business have you to ask questions of such a one as me ? Is it not necessary that I hold the lamp out of respect before the Saint while I am talking to him ; and do you think, at all events, that you can know what I ought to do or not ? Begone, trouble me no more, or you will never get your money ; think of losing *cinquante ! cento ! scudi !*”—At

nothing will succeed after all is said and done; unless you can obtain leave for me to perform some incantations before the shrine of Saint Onofrio, which is shut up in the golden case in the north chamber. He will believe any thing; I shall gain admission there—and then leave the matter to me. I will terrify the Conte di Montescudajo, for I have the means of doing so, into good behaviour for some time to come.”

Scarcely had Buonajuto finished giving Rachaela this lesson, when Pranzetti re-entered, with the great painted roll of Fortune in his hands.

Rachaela played her part admirably; looked over the figures, counted her fingers, twirled herself round, and went through various gesticulations, which acted like magic upon the silly credulous servant. She then declared that she perceived by her art, unless her son was suffered to perform an incantation before the shrine of

lock and latch, and immediately giving Buonajuto admission to the chamber.

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which words Pranzetti flew down stairs, and disappeared in an instant. When he came to Rachaela, she was breathless with agitation, but she kept up the deception exquisitely well, made him fold and unfold a napkin twenty different ways, and then obliged him to turn round till he was quite sick and giddy; but after she had racked her brain for contrivances to engage his attention, and divert him from going after Buonajuto, so much time continued to elapse, that she began to fear some unfortunate catastrophe,—when Buonajuto at length made his appearance.

“Now,” he said, “all is well; you are sure of your fortune; and, in further proof of what I tell you, to-morrow will not pass over your head before your master makes you a donation of a hundred *scudi*. Remember my words: show no symptoms of surprise, no transport of gratitude when he does this; but take your money quietly, and think of him *to whom* you are indebted

for it—namely, to the *povero cieco*; and in return, when the *povero cieco* wants your assistance, remember you are ready to give it him. Above all things, be silent; for if you repeat one word of what has befallen you this night, I warn you that you will finally lose your life; but, in the first place, your money will drop out of your pocket, and your tongue will drop out of your head. As you found the *paoli* under the stone, so will you find your hundred *scudi* given to you to-morrow by your master: but again I command you to remember my words—few thanks to him, reserve your gratitude for me:—and now come, mother, we must away.”

Up jumped Rachaela, forgetting that she was a *povera stroppiata*. In her anxiety to be once more in safety, and to hear how Buonajuto had performed his part, she totally lost sight of her own—but he never forgot, and cried out as if he had heard some sudden noise, which startled his mother.

“What is that I hear? behold my poor old mother has started to her feet: only observe what my incantations have already effected; why she has, in some degree, recovered the use of her legs: I was sure it would be so:—and this is an earnest of the perfect success which will attend you through life, Signor Marchese (to Pranzetti). I wish you joy.”

“Come! *Marchese! Veramente questo e bello!* but the number, the number, you have not told it me yet?”

“Twenty-five thousand, nine hundred and forty-eight, to be sure,” said Rachaella, recovering her presence of mind.”

“Twenty-five thousand, nine hundred and forty-eight: do not forget,” repeated Buonajuto.

“Twenty-five thousand, nine hundred and forty-eight,” re-echoed Pranzetti:—“but haste, mother, we must away; already should we be on our way to the Certosa: let us hasten our steps; mine are much better able to bear me on, thanks

to Messer Pranzetti, since he has refreshed my fainting frame with his charitable donations ; and so *felicissima notte*, and adieu, Signor Marchese."

" I greet you," reiterated Rachaela.

" *Io sono schiavo suo*," bowed Pranzetti ; " *eh, che vi pare ; eh ; come !*" and thus they parted.

To the infinite delight of Buonajuto and Rachaela, they heard the great doors of the *portone* creek on their hinges and close ; then, for the first time, they felt safe, and turning round an angle of the street, were out of sight of the palace in a moment.

Arrived at the Santa Caterina, and Buonajuto having restored to Rachaela her original disguise, she begged her companion to relate what he had done to the Conte di Montescudajo.

" Frightened him out of his base and cowardly senses ; that is all. My life for the security of Ranieri's. Pafetta will cringe and bow, and compose a story to account for and excuse

his villany, and leave the Lanfreducci free to do what he chooses."

"But how, how have you effected all this? I believe you are making a fool of me, as you did of Pranzetti."

"Beware how you suspect Buonajuto when he has once solemnly engaged his honour in a cause, as he did to you. How I have effected the great end, was by telling him some facts which have come to my knowledge, and which place him in my power: but it is much too long and intricate a story to explain to you now—the time may come, till then rest in peace. Keep our secret, and be assured Buonajuto is good at need; call him when you may, you will ever find him ready, and not without resources to serve you."

"You are a very wonderful creature!" was her reply; "and now that you have so well executed my commission, you will surely accept this purse for your trouble."

“Not so,” he said, putting it aside with one hand, “not from thee, Rachaela,” in a voice of tenderness and emotion; then hastily rising, he exclaimed, “one guerdon I will ask of thee,—thy promise never again to venture on such a mad expedition as you have undertaken this night—at least, never unless Buonajuto is at thy side.”

“Who art thou who makest thy will mine?” said Rachaela: “I feel almost awed by thee, stripling as thou art; at all events, be assured I feel grateful. And now, adieu; I hasten home.” Not without my protection though,” added Buonajuto. “I follow till I see you safely within the walls of your palace;” nor did he leave her till Radegonda opened the porch doors, and welcomed her back with anxious joy.

CHAPTER II.

THE RECOGNITION.

“Virtue is the truest liberty: he is not free who stoops to passions; nor he in bondage who serves a noble master.”

Feltham's Resolves.

OH, woman! tender, delicate, timid woman! what hardships will ye not endure, what perils will ye not brave, what false accusations will ye not incur, to serve those you love? Nay, even motives of mere humanity and kindness will make you wholly forgetful of self; and it is for this sweet spirit of benevolence that ye are but too often blamed, too often defamed; and, alas! it is this which renders you frequently liable to become the victims of a devotedness, which those

who are themselves incapable of, make it their business to stigmatise as folly, or to brand with ridicule.

Rachaella had witnessed the suffering anxiety of Ildegarda; she had heard her converse with Cassini on the too probable and dreaded consequences of the recent event, and she had gathered from these conversations that Pafetta was a man who might more readily be prevailed upon to forego a vengeance from fear, than from any generous motive. With all the fire of her imagination thus kindled to a blaze, to resolve and to act were the same thing; so, with the assistance of Radegonda, who had a true nurse's propensity for meddling, Rachaella executed her design in the manner above related. The next day she hastened to relate the whole adventure to the Marchesa Gherardesca; at first, Ildegarda heard her with mingled anger and concern, but as the narration went on, and as the innocent Rachaella explained in her own eager, yet gentle

manner, the reasons which had induced her to undertake so wild a deed, Ildegarda relaxed into a tenderness of expression, in which pleasure strove with rebuke, and taking the damsel's hand, she said, "How could you, my Rachaela, be so imprudent? if discovered, you might have compromised yourself and me for ever: but it was old Radegonda who was alone to blame; it is on her that my anger must fall."

"Oh! not so, not on her, I beseech you, dear Signora! It is I—I alone who deserve your displeasure; if, indeed, this is a matter to call forth displeasure. I conceived the whole plan, nor can I regret it, since I am persuaded you will see the good result which will ensue."

"For the moment, my dear one, it seems not to have been productive of harm, at least you have escaped immediate detection; and if you will solemnly promise me that you will never again trust to Radegonda's advice without consulting me, I pardon you. The

good nurse's ideas of female propriety are none of the most correct, and I assure you, my Rachaela, even yet we may both of us deeply rue the adventures of last night.— And the Lanfreducci," she added, rising and pacing the apartment in agitation, "what will he not think of me? above all, Ermenegilda, the severe Ermenegilda, who only acts by rule, should this ever come to her knowledge."

"It never will," answered Rachaela quickly.

"Ah! my child, wretched are those who repose their security for happiness on the concealment of their actions: it is enough to disapprove a circumstance in one's own conscience, to lay up a store of suffering for life."

"But to save Ranieri?" timidly questioned the girl.

"Ah! if, indeed, your venturous conduct achieves that precious end, I dare not trust myself to answer thee, at least, as far as regards

the present instance. But how camest thou to plan and execute such a scheme—thou, in thine innocent ignorance? I marvel at thee, truly: yet why should I? Is not woman self-taught to compass her wishes? Nature has given to all creatures some means of self-preservation;—on woman she has bestowed beauty and wiles. If these arms were never used but in a pure and generous cause, they would not prove so unworthy as they too often do; still, my Rachaella, concealment, trick, contrivance, are odious things; scarcely can any motive justify the use of such means; and again, my dear one, I must caution, nay command thee, never in future to act without my approbation: it is not fitting thy tender years so to do.”

“ Oh, mistress mine, but that thy gentle looks speak forgiveness, I should scarcely dare to plead my cause further:—one word more, and I have done. Remember that I love thee, and, loving *thee*, love all that thou lovest. She hung

her head, and the blushing of her cheek vouched for the truth of her words: then recovering composure, she went on to say "Radegonda told me of Buonajuto, and related to me such wonderful tales concerning him, that I was half wild to see and prove the truth of them."

"Half wild!—say not so—quite, quite wild, say rather."

"Well, she told me how this Buonajuto goes first by one name, then by another—Scaramuccio Diavolino, Intingolo, and a thousand other fanciful appellations: to-day he is here, to-morrow there; no one knows to whom he belongs. Yet there is hardly a family of which he cannot recount the whole history, not a thing lost that he cannot find again, not a storm in the heavens of which he does not foretel the approach; and many a wonderful occurrence near and afar off has he predicted:—yet no one ever accuses him of mischief, or of doing harm to any, save the wicked or the base; on these he has

frequently exercised various ingenious punishments: in fine, be his power that of superior parts, or super-human intelligence, as some have supposed, it is exerted only for the benefit of mankind."

"This whole account is, in truth, most strange, and, at a leisure moment, we must endeavour to become better acquainted with him: 'twere well, perhaps, to make him one of my suite; doing so may secure his silence, for, after all, what security can we have in such a mysterious character?—But matters of greater moment at present occupy my thoughts. By to-morrow's dawn, the Anziani are to meet, to decide upon this unfortunate business. The Signora Ermenegilda is, I hear, loud in her accusations against me, and intends to denounce me as a person dangerous to my sex, and to the world in general."

Rachaela looked unutterably distressed, but only said, "Oh! Signora, can there be a

heart insensible to your merits? can so dear a being have so deadly an enemy?"

Sleepless was the night they passed; and with the first dawn of day, they were placed at the casement of the window, to watch every movement in the street, and await the tidings which to them were pregnant with intense interest.

Every avenue to the palace of the Anziani was double guarded; and about nine o'clock in the morning, the two persons who were the chief actors in this scene, proceeded to receive the judgment which should be pronounced upon them. Relations, friends, and dependants, of each of the parties, formed a numerous retinue, and it was an awful sight to see them drawn up in the great hall of state, awaiting the sentence which was about to be pronounced. Ranieri Lanfreducci was first summoned to declare what he had to plead in his own defence. He looked indignantly around him.

“Defence!” he exclaimed; “those who have committed no crime disdain to urge aught in their defence: I certainly endeavoured to shield my life when I found it basely attacked, and cast the assassin into the river; but if that be deemed a crime, then are all distinctions confounded;—the natural impulse of self-preservation is turned into crime, and the aggrieved and the aggressor must change natures. I have never hitherto wilfully wronged any man; if I have done so unintentionally, I am ready to make reparation; but, in the present instance of this wanton attack upon my life, as well as to avenge my insulted honour, I demand, that according to the laws of justice and of knighthood, I meet my enemy in single combat to the death, or that he be banished Pisa for life.”

A mute astonishment pervaded the assembly; when Pafetta Conte di Montescudajo started up, and said—

“I am prepared to cast myself on the generous nature of the Signor Lanfreducci for pardon when I shall have explained the motive which instigated me to the fatal deed—a deed for which I now abhor myself, for I have proved that the information which alone impelled me to the act was, in as far as regarded the Signor Lanfreducci, wholly false. When I declare that I sought Ranieri’s life, to save my country from the horrors of a civil war, and by incurring in my own person alone the odium and punishment which his death would inevitably draw down upon me, I may, perhaps, find some patriot breasts to commiserate, if not wholly to exonerate me, from the baseness which attaches to the act, when viewed apart from contingent circumstances. That it was rash I acknowledge; but there was no time to pause; the information was given to me as I was preparing to attend the Giuoco del Ponte, and instigated me to

the deed ; but that, by attempting it, I intended to save the lives of those very men who are now my judges, I aver to be most true : so that, much as I lament my impetuous zeal on the one hand. I cannot do so on the other ; since I have dragged to light an awful conspiracy, which might otherwise, if undiscovered, have deluged the city in blood. Behold this paper ; here are the names and abodes of all those concerned in this treason ; but that of Ranieri is falsely inserted, as I have since discovered."

A low murmur of contradictory opinions ran through the assembly, and was rising to tumult, when silence was again enforced. The parchment tendered to the chief magistrate was by him read aloud, as follows:—

"Having long considered that the prevailing faction of the Raspanti have totally ruined the commerce of our country, and that the Raspanti, from hatred to the Guelphs, have

raised a war between our state and that of Florence, that our ports are deserted—our commerce destroyed ; we, the citizens of Pisa, her merchants, and her children, have determined, not from any motive of personal interest or revenge, but for the good of our country, to displace these Raspanti, and restore the Bergolini to power ; who, having always themselves been engaged in commerce, guarded with jealous care the true interests of the land : but, being unable to effect this restoration by open force or rightful means, we are obliged to take the law into our own hands, and have recourse to secret stratagem and violence. When, at the ensuing solemnity of worship, the people are engaged in the rites of religion, it is decreed that we strike the blow ; and seizing the persons of the chief of the Anziani, even at the feet of the altar, we make them pay the price of their misrule with the forfeit of their lives.

“ Signed by Ranieri Lanfreducci, Federigo

del Muganajo, and eighteen other principal merchants and monied persons of the republic."

"Yes," cried Pafetta, stepping forward, "it is all true,—all, save in one name, which has been falsely registered, and which some villain has counterfeited; Ranieri Lanfreducci is innocent of this treason, my life upon the word. I, who would so lately have sacrificed mine own existence, together with his, to defeat this treason—I stand forth prepared to defend or die for him."

The effect was electric which was produced by the whole of this extraordinary developement: every man looked at his neighbour as though he expected to feel his dagger in his throat.

"Bar the doors," cried the magistrates; "suffer no one entrance or egress until we examine further into the business, and draw the troops around the palace that are appointed for our body guard." This latter order was given from

a balcony ; and the doors being secured, Ranieri was called upon to explain and declare whatever might have come to his knowledge respecting this affair.

“ My innocence has been vouched for by my enemy ; any thing that I could add would only weaken my cause : this only will I declare—that my total and complete ignorance of the whole transaction leaves me not one word more to say.”

Pafetta was again examined, and was questioned as to the mode of his having received the account.

“ I know not, I solemnly assure you, the name, or, I may say, sex of the person who placed this parchment in my hands. I was on my way to the Giuoco when I received it ; and on opening it, its contents were of too stirring a nature to leave me any time for further reflection. During my illness, the consequence of my fall, I have had leisure to investigate the matter thoroughly, and all that has come to my knowledge I have made known : I have also had such in-

dubitable proofs of the Lanfreducci's total ignorance of the conspiracy to which his name stands perfidiously affixed, that I will not see a hair of his head hurt without attempting to avenge his cause : this is the least I can do to compensate for my late unhappy rashness."

It was evidently not the intention of his judges to examine him too rigorously, and his deposition was taken down without further comment. During the declamations of Montescudajo, Ranieri sometimes frowned angrily, sometimes smiled in disdain : and who could see the scorn implied in that smile playing upon his lip of sculptural beauty, and not feel its sting ? Nevertheless, Pafetta approached him, and sued for his forgiveness.

"This time be it so : but when we meet in battle fray again, Signor, have a care that it is in open honourable fight ; should it be otherwise—Ranieri, too, has a poniard. For the past, take my pardon ; for the future, look to thyself."

"Come ; good knights and signors," said the

magistrates, "this is no time for our trusty friends to quarrel, we have enemies enough from without: a truce to all contention; we command you both, on your allegiance to your country."

Messengers having been previously despatched now re-appeared, bearing a signal that they had tidings of importance to communicate; and this signal being recognized, they were instantly admitted.

"The heads of the principal traitors are lying at yon palace gates," were the terrible words pronounced; "and so end all those who oppose the acknowledged magistrates of the republic," was echoed through the senate-house; but some shrunk away in silence, and a mournful expression was visible on the countenances of the greater number of the assembled populace. A death-like silence succeeded this sanguinary and sudden proceeding.

The Anziani now stepping out on a balcony, held up the paper which contained the list of the numerous conspirators, saying, "Let the re-

mainder of these persons who have been deceived and deluded, now return to their duty ; and may the miserable issue of these traitorous proceedings warn all others who would disturb the state's tranquillity." Having thus spoken, the scroll was torn, and the fragments scattered in air ; but the impression of such an event as had now occurred, was not to be so easily cast into oblivion ; and the court being dismissed, the witnesses of the scene retired to their respective homes, in silence and in gloom.

As soon as the tidings were conveyed to Ildergarda, she thanked Heaven for the safety of those most dear to her ; but she blushed for the summary and tyrannical proceeding which had, on the word of one man, consigned so many worthy citizens to sudden and ignominious death ; and she shuddered to think upon whom, and in what manner, this system of despotic will might next be exercised. In any great public event, private interests are for a time forgotten, and the general feeling reflects its colour upon the mind of

each individual, to the temporary exclusion of all personal concerns.

The mourning habits, worn by the most distant relations and friends of the deceased, gave a funereal appearance to the whole city ; and no person passed the square of the Anziani palace, where the blood of the citizens had been shed, who could possibly avoid doing so. For a length of time, such was the state of general feeling in all those who had, in the most distant manner, any connection with the Republic of Pisa ; but, like every other occurrence incident to human nature, the vividness of this impression wore off, and *there*,—where it was thought the sounds of mirth would never more be heard,—there again re-commenced bartering and buying, laughing and singing, meeting and parting, loving and hating, and all the busy bustling of life's cares.

Ranieri bent his steps daily to the Gherardesca ; and, though a slight tinge of melancholy and reserve was visible in his behaviour towards

her, yet it was easy to see that his heart knew no change.

“Will Ermenegilda never do me justice?” asked the Gherardesca one day, when she thought that a greater degree of coldness than usual pervaded Ranieri’s manner, which she attributed to that cause. “Will you never undeceive her as to my behaviour to Pafetta? will you allow her still to accuse me with such cruel injustice, of a conduct that I sorn from my very soul?”

“You cannot feel her injustice more deeply than I do; but let us, Signora, leave time to effect that change, which it is equally beneath you to sue for, and beyond my power to alter or control.”

This answer sufficiently proved to Ildegarda how hopeless the case was; and they ceased altogether to mention the Lanfreducci’s name. This tacit agreement to avoid a subject does not, however, dispel it from the mind, but the very reverse; it leaves it to fester, and rankle there, in

unmitigated corrosive tenacity. Ranieri was not happy, neither was Ildegarda; both were conscious of a chilling coldness which was daily gaining ground upon their intercourse, and this fear can at any time effect the very ill it dreads. The artist's rooms were no longer sought by them, the walks in the Campo Santo were wholly relinquished; Ildegarda confined herself to her palace, and there, with the exception of Cassini, she saw no one. All was changed: alas! when does any thing earthly ever remain the same? especially the fairest and sweetest things, which indeed are the most susceptible of alteration and decay, and against which it appears that time exerts its greatest malignity. The beautiful illusion was fled: Ildegarda saw life in its true colours, or rather she invested it with deeper gloom, from contrasting reality with the seductive imaginations of brightness, in which it had been hitherto viewed by her. There is a modified prospect, a chequered path of light and

shadow, which is sought for and found in after-life by the heart which has been chastened and purified by sorrow, of which, as yet, these lovers were entirely ignorant.

The Gherardesca was persuaded that Ermenegilda never would consent to her union with Ranieri; and he was too good a son, too virtuous a man, ever to incur a parent's disapprobation of any of his actions. The filial tie was not then a dead letter; it was an active vital principle, which pervaded the whole of life, and, taking rise in the heart, it influenced every action, and every event: if, as in the present case, parental will assumed undue and harsh authority, there was still a satisfaction, a pure pride, remaining in the breast of those who submitted to it, from the consciousness of fulfilling their parts in obedience to a power naturally constituted by Heaven, which not all the gratification of indulged self-will can ever bestow. On the other hand, there was a consciousness on the part of the parent that, in return for obedience and devotion, the most un-

remitting tenderness was due. Amid all the rudeness of those times, this link, which binds society together, and humanizes the passions, was universally honoured and guarded inviolate by all who had any pretensions to be respected; neither ridicule nor selfishness excused its infringement; it was recognized as the softener of existence, the chain of all that is precious in civilized life. Wherever this great main-spring of domestic felicity is weakened or broken, anarchy ensues; families are dispersed, and rent asunder; their consequence tarnished, their power annihilated; the elder branches are trodden down, and, it may be, forgotten: but, while the young shoot up for a time, with premature and deceptive growth, that which gave them nourishment and wholesome vigour being destroyed, they will sink into a despicable old age, contemned and braved in their turn by their rebellious offspring; for God never forgets, although man may, and these things are noted elsewhere.

Ildegarda had been too happy a child herself,

and too devoted a one, not to honour the very sentiment in Ranieri's character, which caused her present regret ; and though she mourned over the circumstance with a mixed feeling of sorrow and self-wounded pride, she would not have changed Ranieri's conduct, had it been in her power ; and bowed resigned to what appeared irremediable.

The Gherardesca had now leisure to meditate upon the circumstances which had attended the last month of her existence ;—the review of Rachaela's mad undertaking, the seeming influence which it had upon the Conte di Montescudajo's conduct, came afresh to her recollection, with all its minuteness of detail ; and she wondered that she had not before investigated the matter more narrowly. Having sent for Radeconda, she abruptly questioned her.

“ Why did you encourage Rachaela in that very improper and wild scheme, which might have proved so fatal to our interests, and which in itself was unfitting her age and her appear-

ance? above all, why didst thou not at least go with her thyself?"

"Sweet heart, that thou art angry I lament; but I cannot lament having done what I did; for, if the tragedy that was enacted proved bloody, what would it not have done, had Ranieri's head been one of those that lay at the Anziani's gate? which would most assuredly have been the case, had it not been for Buonajuto."

"But who is this Buonajuto? and what do you know concerning him? How was it in his power to have said any thing to the Montescudajo, which could have changed his resolves, or have had the least influence upon his actions? In fine, how can you prove to me that it was Buonajuto's interference which effected Ranieri's safety?"

"My gracious Signora, you ask so many questions, all one upon the top of another, that it quite puzzles my poor head to hear you; one at a time, and then perhaps I may be able to satisfy you. Let me see," counting on her

fingers;—"first, who is Buonajuto?—why, there now, there's a question that would take me a long lent to answer; and, after all was said and done, neither you nor I might be the wiser. I certainly could, to a certain degree,—that is to say, I certainly might if I would, say a good deal explanatory upon that head; but, sweet nursling, you know your old nurse is not over-fond of long stories, as some of her trade are. I remember Pica, while she sat watching the dying Conte Guidi, was telling him a story when the death-rattle was in his throat; but I ——"

"Ay, good Radegonda, you were going to tell me who Buonajuto is: but I shall be dead too, before you come to the point."

"Bless that sweet face of thine, lady:—why, there now, just like thy usual wont—ever impatient, and such an engaging drollery about thee. Well, well, Buonajuto *was* and *is* a very wonderful boy; that much I know."

"But who are his parents? are they alive?"

“ Alive, oh ! no ; that is to say, I do not know they are, if all be true that I have heard : but, bless me, it would take a month to tell you all I have heard concerning him and his forefathers. Some say that his parents (Heaven shrive them from their sins !) were very wicked people, and that they left this their offspring no other legacy than some power with secret intelligences, which would end in his undoing.”

“ A truce with such nonsense !” interrupted Ildegarda ; “ you know I never listen to such tales ; but the parents of such a young lad cannot have died so long ago, but that some persons now in Pisa must have seen and known them.”

“ Ay, many, for that, lady, many a one ; but owing to circumstances, no one likes to speak of, or even allude to them ; and those who do remember the reputed parents, do not know for certain that this Buonajuto was their son. In short, all I can tell you, lady, is this,—only

do not ask me any more criss-cross questions, for I do not like to be questioned, it always puzzles me;—in short, when I saw how ill matters were going with Ranieri, I went off myself to consult a friend who has a good deal of insight into out-of-the-way topics, and she said, ‘If any body can help you, it is Buonajuto.’ So I told this to Rachaela, because I knew that learned, reasoning, wise people, like you, my honoured mistress, never will believe in any means being good, which they cannot account for and reason upon; whereas, often by the proud self-love of that very reason, they let slip many opportunities of doing and receiving good: so I thought the innocent damsel there would do as I bade her without more ado, and have a much better chance of success; she would lose no time in *whys*, and *wherefores*, and *may bes*, but trust to Providence, and the assistances which come from unknown quarters. People think too much of their own individual skill; and do not take the aids which

Heaven sends them, but will be prying about in order to satisfy their own vanity, and to say, 'I did this!' whereas it is often ordained, that our help in greatest needs proceeds from unexpected sources, that we can in no wise account for."

"Dear nurse, thy mother wit and thy nonsense are so agreeably blended together, that truly I would not disjoin them if I could: in fine, you will not tell me more of this mysterious personage than what it pleases you to tell; and I see there is some secret which I am not to be made acquainted with attached to the story of this boy. Be it so, good Radegonda: but may I not see him? may I not, if I like, take him into my service? his cleverness piques my curiosity; I should like, at least, to converse with him."

"Oh! for the matter of that, sweet heart, nothing is more easy; at least I should think so; but, at all events, we can try. Let Rachaela

accompany me ; for, you know, the young have a peculiar power over the young, and that indeed is the reason why I did not go with her before, for then she had Buonajuto to accompany her, and I could have only been in the way ; now the case is different, we will go together in quest of the boy, and bring him to you if it be possible.”

“ Well, be it so, let Rachaela go with thee ; but surely it cannot require much persuasion to induce a young, starving, houseless beggar to come to my palace, and taste of my bounty.”

“ No, sure, lady ; neither would it, if the boy knew thee and loved thee ; but remember, coarse aliment and the Heaven’s covering is all that he requires ; he owes no one any thing for these, and he has his own particular pleasures,—running, riding, swimming, and who knows what wild pranks besides ; all which, perhaps, he could not have in the servitude of marble palaces. I have often heard thee talk of freedom, dear mistress,

but you have never enjoyed the sweets you talked about:—he has. The great and the opulent cannot taste of true freedom; they are slaves to themselves from their swathing-clothes. Why, Heaven love thee! thy delicate limbs could not bear hunger, and cold, and heat, and toil: of all these thou art the vassal; and it is fitting thou shouldst be, in degree: every one, according to his station, has some troublesome ties—all the birds of the air don't dwell in the same nests:—one has one gift, and another another; but with every gift there is a penalty, and Buonajuto has the gift of liberty, the pain of poverty: but you, dear one, have the gift of wealth, and the many pains attached thereto. Now, I do not know, indeed I do not believe, that this boy would resign the station in which Providence has placed him, for any other; but you can try."

"In truth, good nurse, all your natural wisdom has taught me more than I ever learnt

before in my whole life. But you have given me a greater desire than ever to see and converse with Buonajuto; bring him to me at all events."

"I will only put on my hood, and Rachaela shall take her veil, and we will set forth in quest of him directly."

Rachaela, attended by Radegonda, lost no time in going upon a commission so pleasant to her; and in the same alley where she had been first directed to look for him, she espied a number of ragged boys playing at a game they had devised by throwing pebbles in a hole in the pavement, which they were so intently engaged in, that they did not at first hear the question addressed to them, "What is become of Buonajuto?"

"What! he with the large head of hair, and supple joints? Oh! Scaramuccio," said one.

"Intingolo," said another.

"Diavolino," said a third; "Oh! he is gone to-day to the Serchio, on a swimming party; he

has betted with two other boys, that he will remain in the water till he kills them with fatigue and cold, and not be a bit the worse himself."

"When will he return?"

"*Chi sa?*" was the answer; and they pursued their game.

"But have you no notion when he is likely to come home again?"

"Home!" said the boy, laughing, "Buonajuto's home is everywhere and nowhere."

"Ah, but I have a message for him," rejoined Radegonda, "from the Palazzo Gherardesca."

"Oh!" said one of the boys, jumping to his feet, "from the Palazzo Gherardesca! then, if you will intrust it to me, it shall be safely delivered, and quickly."

"No, no," rejoined Rachaela, "I always like to be the bearer of a message myself: so many things may occur to prevent a third person's acting or speaking for one, as one would

in one's own person : only tell us if you think Buonajuto is really at the Serchio ?”

“ Yes, truly, *sicuro, sicuro.*”

Upon this assurance, she turned Rachaella round, and hurried her away to the fountain, where all the peasants come to wash their vegetables ; and there espying a strong-looking *stuccio*, or ass, well laden with garden produce, she applied to its owner to allow her to hire it to go as far as the Serchio, on promise of paying handsomely, and returning the animal in safety.

“ What ! do you think I would consent to your going away with it altogether ? make me no more such idle propositions—begone, don't laugh at me.”

“ Come,” cried Radegonda, “ give up this nonsensical scheme of riding to the Serchio in the heat of the day. Buonajuto will be back in Pisa soon : let us return home ; don't persist in this impatience.” But youth is ever chary to

let pass a pleasure, while age seems to think there is always time enough in store to enjoy. This is the very inverse proposition of that which one should imagine ; nevertheless, so it is.

“ No, no !” cried Rachaela ; “ do you return home ; I will go for Buonajuto.” So saying, she held a piece of money in her hand, crying—
“ This for the loan of your *stuccio*, during a few hours.”

“ Well, you may ride it for—let me see—how many *paolis* will you give me ?” counting them ;—“ yes, yes, you may ride the beast, only I will walk by you.”

But this would have rendered Rachaela’s excursion a tedious affair, and she refused the agreement, saying, “ Farewell, then, I must leave you ; for my time is short, and I could not go so slowly as you would walk.”

“ I walk very swiftly ; nevertheless, to suit your convenience, I will make this arrangement ;—you may ride, providing I get up behind you.”

"*Mille grazie,*" said Rachaela, helping her to unload the animal.

"And what is to become of me?" cried Radegonda.

"Oh! I will take very good care of her," answered the old woman; and going up close to Radegonda, she looked at her fixedly, and whispered something in her ear. "Be sure you do."

"Never fear." And now Rachaela aided the peasant to mount, and jumping up behind her, "*Arri! arri!*" screamed the old woman; and off the *stuccio* set at a hard amble.

"*Ahi! ahi!*" again cried out the peasant; "*fermati.*"

"*Non c'e paura,* replied her young gay companion, laughing, and urging the animal faster and faster. Thus they proceeded, the one scolding, the other laughing, till they arrived at the river's brink.

"*Ahi! ahi! gli ossi miei son tutti fracassati:*

il denaro il denaro dammilo subito?”—and when Rachaela poured the *paolis* liberally into her hand, she looked up in her face, saying, “Ah! you have not forgotten Marinella.”

“Marinella!” ejaculated the astonished Rachaela, “Is it possible? art thou really Marinella?” and gazing intently at her, she thought she recognized her features; there was the glassy eye, the shrivelled lip, the small pointed nose: but the hueless white of Marinella’s complexion was not to be seen; the very reverse presented itself in the brown shining skin, like a hazel nut, of the sun-burnt peasant. A net completely concealed the hair; so that the disguise was complete, and it was impossible for any one to have recognized her, had she not spoken in her peculiar tone of voice. Her dress, too, was neat and clean; the folded napkin on her head, the long golden ear-rings, the broad laced handkerchief, the flowered petticoat, and coloured bodice covered with pearls and silver chains;

all so unlike Marinella, that, had she not spoken again, and reminded Rachaela of some of the peculiarities of her life at Volterra, she could hardly have credited her senses: then came, too, the ruling passion, the voracious desire of gold, and its expression sufficiently satisfied her of Marinella's identity.

“ You are rich, child, I observe now; and methinks, as you have not seen me for so long a while, thou mightest give thy poor old mother a more ample recompense for having dislocated her bones by riding so madly.”

Rachaela shuddered to find herself once more within the power, as it were, of this strange creature; and too ready to purchase her liberty at any price, the terrified girl gave her all the money she had, promising to give her more when she should be safe back at the Palazzo. Marinella indulged in one of her fearful fiendish laughs. “ I understand thee; never fear, never

fear ; and in proof that thou needest not do so, I will tell thee that I guess whom thou art come to seek here, and I will go to the Torre, where the boy usually resides, and bring him to thee."

But ere she had uttered these words, a great concourse of children and young persons were seen approaching, shouting and singing, and making a joyous outcry, while some of them carried a litter made of boughs of trees, on which sat Buonajuto, in his ragged attire, with a branch of ilex tied by a scarlet ribbon round his brow ; the whole group forming a picture that might have suited a painter for a study. Away flew Rachaella, with her swift footstep, and catching at the ear of triumph, for such it seemed intended to be, called Bounajuto to descend, and listen to what she had to say.

The whole troop, on a signal made by him, bowed as in obedience to her command, and having lowered the enwoven branches on which

he was placed, he leapt lightly off, and with no uncourteous demeanour, demanded what he could do to serve her.

“I bring you tidings of good news and brilliant fortune, and I hope you will be grateful for all the services I have rendered you,” cried Marinella, screaming from afar.

“Do not doubt it : have you ever found me wanting in duty and respect ?”

“Never !” She then beckoned him to come with her and Rachaela, apart from his playmates. On a signal made by him, the latter immediately withdrew to a distance, and were apparently as much under his control as a well-trained band of soldiers is to their commander. Marinella bade Rachaela explain the message she had brought ; she did so : Buonajuto listened attentively and respectfully to what she communicated. She spoke lightly of the luxury and wealth he would enjoy in the Gherardesca’s palace, but dwelt feelingly on the happiness of be-

ing admitted to her conversation, and the charm of her presence. "So beautiful, and with all so great is she in her native greatness, that you might tremble before her, as though she were not a being of this earth. Do you understand the proposal I have made to you?" seeing that still the boy was silent.

"*Gia, gia,*" he replied, and relapsed into a thoughtful posture.

Marinella, no longer able to contain herself, came close up to him, and shaking him rudely, bawled in his ear, "Are you deaf, you *sciocco*? hear what is offered to you, and be thankful. Is it not wonderful that such a wild worthless animal as thou art, should be promoted to such great fortune?"

"Signora," putting away Marinella with one hand gently, and turning to Rachaela, "I am unworthy of the post you offer me, it is true : I have had no education ; I have led a vagabond life, hitherto of no use to any one ; in this res_

pect, I am wholly unsuited to the situation you are good enough to propose to me ; but in another point of view, it is unworthy of me, for it is servitude : I hate slavery,—and yet it is the pervading evil : man is the slave of man in this our poor debased country ; nothing noble can be achieved where that is the case. The men who go forth to battle, though they fight bravely, fight in vain ; they are mere machines, obeying the will of some tyrant, who for his own particular views, enjoys the waste of blood that tracks his path. The men who remain at home do worse still ; they serve one task-master one day, another another ; and when they have stocked their little farm, or gathered their vintage, some devil or other comes and says—we want revenues for the State ; we want food for our armies who are defending your hearths ; and they sweep away all the hard-earned gains of the sweat of their brow. I would not, therefore, be a soldier, nor yet a peasant ; the minion of

a palace still less ; and though I am now a wandering, wild, and worthless boy, there may come a time when Scaramuccio will show what he can do :—in the mean while, the earth, and the air, and the sea, are my instructors, and I hope to learn some things from their varied lessons, which I could not learn elsewhere. No, lady Rachaela, I cannot accept your offer ; but I am very grateful, and ——”

“ What has he been saying ? ” impatiently interrupted Marinella, “ what is all that long story about ? Does he understand that he is to have twenty *acudi* a month, and four rich suits of clothes a year, and to stand in the princess’s presence ? does he understand all this, and will he still refuse ? *Oh ! stuccio Saumara, bestia*, that he is ! I am a miserable woman, to have fostered and nourished such an unworthy creature ! ” and here she began to whine and moan like the sound of the sharp north-east.

“ You know very well,” said Buonajuto, ad-

dressing her, "that, while I have strength to work, to run, to fight, or to dig, you shall never want for bread. Already have I lined your coffers well; thou knowest it, but I will not be the slave of thy avarice at the expense of my own sentiments of right and wrong."

"Hush! hush! do not be angry; you are not to be tamed any more than the torrent and the whirlwind. I have often tried to make you know what was for your good, but it is all in vain, you have never cared more for a piece of gold than for a root of *finocchia*."

Rachaella had been too much interested in hearing and looking at this extraordinary personage, to pay much attention to Marinella; and having satisfied herself that she was not mistaken, that her heart did not mislead her, she cast her arms round Buonajuto's neck, and sobbing, said;

"My dear, dear Edoardo, is it really you? Oh! yes, the companion of my childhood, the

dear boy whom I saved from perishing ; let us not part again, I beseech you. But how thou art grown ! what a tall creature ! how strong and strange thou art become ! Thou wouldst not cry now for a snow storm."

"Dear Rachaela, many is the time I have seen and watched you, when you thought not of me. Do you remember the Isola della Gorgona, and the fisher's song ? and do you remember the day when your bird flew over the Arno, and the boy who plunged in not to lose sight of it, and who caught it almost as soon as it reached the shore ?"

"Oh ! dear Edoardo, what a delight to have found you again ! and is it, indeed, really yourself ?"

Here followed a long and rapturous expression of innocent and mutual delight.

"But you will not live with me," mournfully ejaculated Rachaela.

"I will do better ; I will watch over you with

a brother's care." Then assuming his quaint, wild manner again, he began rolling and jumping about, flying up one tree, and down another, with a degree of rapidity that was quite astonishing ; " These are some of my feats," he said, " and they are not to be despised ; they may serve me in good stead : and remember, Buonajuto is ever at your service—

Whenever you beckon,
On him you may reckon ;
Whenever you call,
In desert or hall,
In wet or in dry,
Your familiar is nigh ;
To do your behest,
And serve to his best.

He uttered this doggrel rhyme with a rapidity not less surprising than the suppleness of limb and of action which he had just displayed ; and now waving his hand, he leaped once again on his leafy car, and his attendants bore him away into an olive ground, where it appeared that preparations were made for a repast.

"*Ahi!*" cried Marinella, looking after him, and shaking her long lean fingers above her head; "so it ever was: what will become of it I know not—but he is a man, and men are ever successful. It is we who are doomed to suffering. Come along, I must see thee safe home again; and before I leave thee I expect a *buona mana* for my trouble; remember, I agreed to bring thee here, but not to take thee back for the same sum, so thou must give me another piece of gold when we arrive."

"Oh, with pleasure!" answered Rachaella, all delight beaming in her eyes and glowing in her heart at the meeting which had taken place between her and her brother.

"Fool!" muttered Marinella.

"*Arri! arri!* to the *stuccio*;" and once more they were on their way back to Pisa.

CHAPTER III.

THE FESTA.

“ But why should foresight thy fond heart alarm?
Perish the love that deadens young desire !
Pursue, poor imp, th’ imaginary charm,
Indulge gay hope, and fancy’s pleasing fire—
Fancy and hope too soon shall of themselves expire.”

Beattie.

THE account which Rachaela gave her mistress of the mission she had performed in obedience to her orders, only served to excite in the latter a still more eager desire to obtain such an uncommon, and apparently noble-minded creature as Buonajuto, to be one of her suite ; but it was not without considerable anxiety that she

heard of Marinella's re-appearance on the scene, lest she should claim Rachaella as her own: although the Marchesa felt determined not to part with her; still she foresaw various difficulties; and unpleasant circumstances were likely to ensue, should such a claim be urged.

The discovery, too, that Buonajuto and Edoardo was the same extraordinary personage, and the brother of Rachaella, was a circumstance replete with mysterious interest. Ildegarda hoped by bringing him to converse with her on terms of greater intimacy, to discover a clue to the parents of these singular children.

“Edoardo is truly a being of a decided character,” said she to Rachaella, “that rarest of most rare species of human kind. There are clever persons, accomplished persons, learned persons, but very few, if any, who remain unsophisticated by society, who dare to act and to think for themselves, preserving the noble

independence of their own individuality, and who feel they are accountable only to God and their own conscience:—such an one is Edoardo; and come of it what may, cost me what it will, I must, at least, see and converse with him. If he will not come to me, I will go in quest of him; but, once again, you shall be my messenger: a few evenings hence, I open my palace for the first time since the general mourning, and you shall invite your brother to join the throng.”

“ Oh !” replied Rachaela, looking distressed, “ certainly, Illustrissima, if you so command me: but consider, loved mistress, how can he obey you?—poor Scaramuccio can never be a fitting guest for all the great and the gay, who will meet in your palazzo. The real affection I feel for him would make it very painful to me to see one whom I consider my brother, in ragged attire, and matted locks, contrasted with the gems and finery and splendid clothes, that

will blaze at your conversazione :— no, honoured mistress, you would not wish to put us to such disgrace.”

“ From all I hear of Edoardo, he will be the brightest gem himself ; for he has a free and independent spirit, which will shine forth, to adorn him with lustre, be that concealed as it may by outward and untoward circumstances. I have seen the great of the earth ; I have basked in the pomps and vanities of life—but neither of these can exalt the soul, or raise the heart to happiness : it is not so with the great in mind ; with them we rise superior to ourselves, and in feeling our own inferiority we become exalted. Hie thee, then, to thy brother, my own loved damsel, and bring him to me, yea, even to my hall when it is filled with all the nobles of the land.”

“ It is enough—you shall be obeyed.”

Away flew Rachaela, a sentiment of honest pride elating her heart ; and with joy she bent

her steps towards the Duomo, Edoardo's usual haunt. In the large open space which surrounds that noble building, she beheld her brother exercising a number of boys, and so intent upon his amusement, that he did not perceive her. She sat down on the steps of the cathedral to observe his proceedings: he had divided his troops into two parties; one was to attack, the other to defend a certain position. They were armed with sticks and staves; and Scaramuccio carried on the mock battle with such bravery, that she began to fear there was more of reality in the contest than she could have wished to witness. It was curious to remark the feints, and evolutions, and war-like movements which this boy-warrior devised; above all, when at one time he was rallying his discomfited band, Rachaela listened with a spell-bound delight to the fiery eloquence he poured forth in an address to his soldiers; and in truth, this youth, in his tattered gar-

ments, presented such a noble figure of animated enthusiasm, as a poet or painter would have chosen for a theme, and one which afforded to the untutored, but discerning Rachaela, a still higher interest in a developement of the talents of a being so justly dear to her heart.

Scaramuccio at length perceived Rachaela, but he did not immediately come to her; as if vain to show off his prowess, he singled out one of the boys to wrestle with, till she called out to him to desist, and besought his attention. Having now bore away a scarf that was tied round his antagonist, he brought the trophy in his own jumping, wild way, and placed it at Rachaela's feet.

"Thanks," he said; "thanks, my gentle playmate, for having so patiently witnessed my games; may I live to prove that I will yet achieve very different deeds in your honour! Now what would you of your Edoardo?"

Rachaella made known her message ; adding, " The Marchesa bids me say, that she had far rather see the ragged boy who refuses all her favours, and who prefers freedom and poverty to the idle life and riches she would bestow on him, than behold the presence of any earthly sovereign."

Scaramuccio shook his locks, inasmuch as they could be shaken, for they stood in matted masses, resembling the sculpture of a statue's, rather than living tresses. " Do not ask me, Rachaella : do I deserve so very ill of thee, that thou shouldst wish me to be subjected to the taunts and ridicule of perfumed dames and cavalieres ? Rachaella, even this I would do if it were really to serve you ; but, honoured as I feel myself to be by the good opinion the Marchesa entertains of me, I should feel myself degraded as a man, were I to enter into scenes which are, at present, so unsuited to me."

“As a man !” rejoined Rachaela, laughing, and looking at his light boyish figure ; “ nay, now, Edoardo, be not angry that I laugh ; but thou art yet so very young.”

His face was dyed like crimson, as he replied, “ True, I am yet a child in years, but my heart is old in all the feelings of honourable enthusiasm.”

“ You are certainly a dear delightful creature,” rejoined his partial auditress ; “ and you know with what sentiments of affection and admiration I love and admire you ; but methinks, there is something of savage rudeness, not manly dignity, in refusing the invitation of a lady, when it cannot possibly affect your interests to your disadvantage.”

“ Do you think so ? do you really think so, Rachaela ?”

“ I do, most truly.”

“ Well, then, whatever may be the conse-

quence, I will go; though, remember I warn you, that being known and remarked may prove extremely injurious to me."

"How can that be? nay, tell me how," she said, half incredulously; "for if this is really the case, the Marchesa Ildegarda is far too kind to wish for your presence."

"I cannot, at present, be more explicit, Rachaella; but if you doubt my word, you are not worthy of my love; trust to me, and you will not find me wanting—doubt me, and you lose me." A melancholy expression passed over his countenance, the more striking, because it was wholly unusual; it was a dark portentous cloud that obscured the most brilliant day. Rachaella saw this, and felt it with her own quickness of perception; she even shuddered, as if some unknown evil was to be the sure consequence of her having, for a moment, suspected him; it was a brief sensation, however, for in another

moment Buonajuto's usual careless joyousness returned, and he commenced all the pantomimic gestures which so entertained Rachaela, that she quickly forgot every thing save the actual pleasure she experienced.

“For the present, dear Rachaela, farewell ! to-night, then, the boy Scaramuccio will prove to you, for the second time, that he can and will be all things at your bidding.”

Having thus spoken, he darted away, hallooing and screaming to his tattered crew, who had hitherto waited for him at a respectful distance, only testifying their impatience in a subdued manner, by wheeling occasionally in distant circles around him and Rachaela, like garrulous swallows, calling upon some lagging companion to accompany them in their flight, and now with winged steps they hastened after their leader, in all the ebullition of youthful spirits.

When Rachaela described the above inter-

view to her mistress, the latter exclaimed—
“Oh! I must attach that being to me; I will not leave any means unresorted to on my part, which can persuade him to become one of us; you must assist me, my dear one, in my design; and believe me when I say, I had rather have his presence to grace my feast, than that of any other person I have invited.”

“What, would you rather see him than the Lanfreducci?” questioned Rachaela, with an archness of expression that made Ildegarda blush as she replied, questioning in her turn—

“And you, my Rachaela, which of them would you rather see?”

For a moment she hung down her head, but more as if reflecting, than from any confusion the demand created; then again looking up, and shaking back the crisped glories of her hair from off her countenance, she fixed her eyes on Ildegarda's, and said very gravely, “I really do not know which I long most to behold.”

“Thou art a silly damsel,” was her mistress’s reply, laughing as she spoke; “who but I would give thee credit for sincerity?”

“It may be so, dear Signora, but listen to the description of my feelings towards both these persons; and then you may, perhaps, answer that which I cannot answer to myself. Edoardo was with me when I first opened my eyes to life, at least to the life of consciousness: my first care was for him, but soon he repaid me by his answering care, and, though younger than I, he became stronger and bolder, and used to assist me over the torrents, and through the dangers of our fiery regions; he brought back my stray flocks, wove paniers from the straw of the Indian corn to carry my flowers, and rendered me a thousand little attentions and services, that endeared him to me, I cannot tell you, Signora, how much; for you, Illustrissima, who have every thing at command, can form no idea what it is to obtain a wished-for pleasure, by

the exertion of one's own labour, or still more by that of a being one loves;—and how often Edoardo procured me these pleasures I cannot enumerate—but can I forget them? never!—Then he is so amusing,—he makes me laugh so!” and she laughed to think of it. “But again; the Lanfreducci, who would not honour, admire, love him? I could be in the same apartment with him, and be quite happy, although he looked not at me, nor thought of me. I want no amusement, no occupation, in his presence. It is enough that he is there: when he is there all things are beautiful; his voice is music, his breath is perfume, there is a fulness of content in beholding him which leaves no space for any other wish or thought to enter. Yet, if I were desired to forego the society of Scaramuccio, in order to obtain his, I should not hesitate which to choose: the turtle dove would as soon forget its hovel, as I forget Edoardo. But then, if you ask, “Wouldst

thou be happy, Rachaela?—no, Rachaela could never be happy again. Have I made myself understood? Illustrissima, canst thou read my heart?”

“Yes, dear Rachaela, I see through it as through a translucent stream; thy feelings are as pure as they are genuine. Yet art thou entangling thyself in a web of suffering, which will, I fear, render thee miserable. Ah! who can take the canker from the flower, when once it has fallen on its bloom?”

“Unsay that melancholy word, dear Signora: tell me only that I shall ever be dear to thee; so shall sorrow and Rachaela never meet.”

The hours passed heavily till the evening came, which brought the brilliant crowd to the Palazzo Gherardesca. There were ladies attended by professed lovers, who felt no love, and knew the passion only by name; and there were ladies who had no lovers in attendance—but in whose breasts glowed the purest, brightest flame.

There were patriots *de profession* likewise, who knew nothing of what they professed, and cared about it less, except inasmuch as it furthered their own petty views of interest: poets whose muse came only at the bidding of gold, or at the fragrance of an Umido: painters who worked by receipt; and parasites of all descriptions. Then there were decorated corpses stalking about, (for all times and countries have of these,) who seemed ~~to~~ have come there merely from being doomed to haunt the scene of their former pleasures by way of punishment for having passed their best days in no other pursuit than the heartless gratification of Vanity. Some of those who were following the very same career, but were young in the track, looked at them with scorn; forgetting that, a few years over, they in their turn bid fair to become precisely one of the same denomination; and others again pushed past these whited sepulchres, wholly regardless of the lesson they taught, either for

the present or the future : while they themselves turned the dim orbs of their rayless eyes to the long mirrors-right and left, in hopes of seeing the images of that beauty they had once seen reflected there ; and then the ghastly expression, between a grin and a smile, that followed the recognition of what they now were, sufficiently testified the gnawing worm within. What is more sad than this proof of the misapplication of the purposes of existence, this fruitless quest of mistaken happiness? Age is beautiful in repose ; in the calm sunshine of domestic cheerfulness, and the heartfelt hilarity of social enjoyments. Age is still respectable when it sanctions and restrains by its presence the gaieties and pastimes of youth ; but when, from vacuity of mind, or vitiated habit, it is seen frequenting, night after night, and year after year, the glaring scenes of show and dissipation, it becomes a melancholy and contemptible spectacle. Thus thought Zanobi the

poet, as he noted down the following lines in his tablets :—

So near the grave, so wither'd and so bent,
Those dim eyes closed, as though their light was spent ;
And still the sharpen'd features keenly set
On life's sad trifles—doting even yet,
With hearing dull, and slow, enfeebled pace,
Counting the follies which thine age disgrace.
Thy sear and yellow leaf, a sapless thing,
Owns not one honour of a fruitful spring ;
Thine is no age of beauteous evergreen,
But dry and heartless as thy course has been ;
No high aspirings, like a sun gone down,
Leaves a rich light of bright and fair renown,
To shed upon th' horizon of thy days
The upward splendour of departing rays ;
But drear and cold life's evening hour hath spread
Anticipated death around thy head.
Thou mov'st, 'tis true, and breathest—but wherefore so,
None careth whether thou art here or no ;
And when thou 'rt gone, what heart will raise a shrine,
In which thy mem'ry's kept as thing divine ?
Not one !—thou art, and wast—but woe is me !
Like keel that plough'd athwart the trackless sea,
Or wing that cleft the air, and left no trace,
Such is thy hopeless, useless, cheerless race !
O miserable sight !—so near the grave,
Hast thou no work to do?—no soul to save ?

Wilt thou on dissipation, cards, and strife,
Set the vast hazard of eternal life.
So near the grave !—and yet to earth so bound ;
Again I questioned wherefore ?—When a sound
Of voice appalling met my startled ear,
And answered, all her hopes are bounded *here* !

But in the motley crowd which composed this assembly, there were many whom ridicule and detraction vainly essayed to reach : among these was that renowned commander, who had won fresh laurels for his ungrateful country, after years of oblivion and neglect. Nor was this hero a mere hero of the world ; he was not a man of mere stratagem and spoil, of mental resources, and cold-blooded policy, whose glory is the glory of a fiend, rather than of a human being—No ! this man was a hero in the genuine sense of the word ; “ mild in manners, fierce in fight : ” who loved and respected all the endearing ties of the social affections ; one, by whom domestic virtue was as conscientiously guarded as public welfare ; who considered the latter as de-

pendent on the former, and who was wont to say —“ When the source of the spring is polluted, how can the stream flow brightly ?” This hero’s laurels were gathered in the field to flourish around his domestic dwelling ; his was the glory which dazzles not to mislead ; which forms no apology for vice ; covers no degrading passions ; is blessed here, and will be blessed hereafter. Another man, of very different habits and appearance, stood near him, yet they were kindred souls :—Cassini was of great age, but so lightly had time passed over this delightful person, that it had not robbed him of the power to charm ; in his mind, in his movements he had all the elasticity of youth ; no violent, ungoverned passions had left their ravages on his benignant countenance ; no inward gnawing remorse had pinched and withered his serene features ; the open brow, the keen eye, accustomed to penetrate into the very secrets of the soul, and to see as clearly the latent germ of mental, as of

bodily disease, remained unfurrowed and unobscured; the rich tinted lip, which told that temperance had guarded it from pollution or decay, and that naught but purity and truth had ever passed its portals;—all these related the story of this good man's life; but there were a thousand tongues and a thousand hearts which testified their confirming evidence to these: nor was Cassini averse to hear them; their praises were the honest rewards of his toils, the well-earned meeds of a soul made up of kindness. Cold is that heart, and dull that ear, which is insensible to the voice of deserved commendation.

Cassini's was not of these. His eye would glisten, and the eloquent blood speak in the freshness of his clear brown cheek, when the tongue of affection sounded his praise, or the voice of fame echoed the consciousness of well-merited approbation; and in the midst of busy life, a spectator of many scenes and actions, most

averse to his nature and his principles, he kept the even tenour of his way, and walked unspotted through the world.

Cino, the painter, (a title he did not shrink from, but gloried in,) was another man regarded by all with esteem and consideration. He did not make his genius an excuse for impertinence ; and, although deeply imbued with imaginative conceptions, and not free from superstition, his eccentricities were never troublesome or offensive, nor did he obtrude them unsought for on any person ; of modest, retired habits, happy in a world of his own, he was seldom seen in the gay and great meetings of public amusement, but occasionally he yielded to the entreaties of those whose vanity or whose friendship found a gratification in his presence ; nor did he altogether lose his precious and devoted time by this acquiescence in the wishes of others. Much of beauty and of splendour floated before him, which he treasured up in

his mind's tablets, to transmit, by the power of his art, to after ages. It is one of the privileges of creative minds to discover in scenes and in persons apparently the most dull and void of matter, subjects and incentives applicable to their own higher speculations; a single glance, a feature, an air, the combination of colours, the effect of lights and shadows;—these present themselves as treasures to the painter, even in factitious scenes of gay and glittering crowds. “I would not,” said Cino, “be confined to any sphere or scene; all are alike favourable in their different modifications and varying natures—they instigate, impel, or mould the mind, as it were, and fashion its ideas into shapes of more than mortal beauty: there is not a plait in a lady's garment, or a waive in her plume, which are not noted by me.”

With the softer sex such a declaration obtained for him many favouring smiles; each in-

dividual fancied that it was the peculiar plait of her own dress, or the peculiar waive of her own feather, to which he alluded. At this general mistake he smiled, mournfully reflecting on the power of vanity, which appropriates to itself every allusion, and feeds its insatiable appetite on every thing presented to it.

“Yet,” said Cino, “if this deceptive habit of mind intoxicates only to a certain degree of pleasurable self-satisfaction, without exciting a wish to deteriorate from others, is it, after all, so very despicable a quality? It appears to me to be its abuse, and not its use, that is so contemptible, so destructive.”

Zanobi, Cino’s friend, a poet himself, and the son of a crowned poet, drew, likewise, from all sources for his art. Like Cino, he disdained not the assemblies of the titled great, nor affected that exclusive love of retirement, which some do from an implied superiority, and others, it may be, from a nervous habit, or an ascetic

turn of mind—no; Zanobi was a poet in the true spirit of that spiritual gift, seeking for, and finding excitement in, all the varied scenes of life. He was often heard to declare, “That mind must be indeed exhaustless, which, entirely thrown upon itself, requires no other aliment than what it may derive from study: living stimulus I hold to be fully as necessary as dead learning. The countenances of animated, breathing beings, the conversation of others superior to, or, if not superior, different from, ourselves, and our own pursuits, must expand the intellect, and afford it a wider field of comparison, a more noble and liberal way of judging.” “Nevertheless, retirement and nature, in all its wildness,” rejoined the painter, “is very necessary too, to that aggrandisement of thought, and that purity of feeling, which are essential to any great work. If, indeed, we could live and converse with superior intellects alone, or if we could be ourselves sufficiently free from the puerile

cares and interruptions to which all are liable in a city life, that sphere of existence would, perhaps, afford greater variety of material for thought than any other; but the minor impertinences of common existence recur here too frequently, and interfere with that unbroken repose which is so necessary to the completion of any great design. Impulses may be given anywhere, in a crowd as in a desert; but the conception of a work is not its fulfilment, and the gradual steps from its birth to its ripened perfection, are slow and toilsome, and best prosecuted in a life of retirement, amid natural objects. It is a due proportion, therefore, of busy scenes intermingled with seclusion, which most effectually fosters and encourages human capacities."

Cassini, who delighted in hearing these persons converse, now joined in their discourse. "As far as my experience teaches me, I have seen very few characters pass unalloyed through the bustling cares of a town life. There is in-

finite danger to the best, of that induration of the heart, which is but too often the consequence of the jostling and contradictory interests which are perpetually interfering with each other ; but notwithstanding this, there undoubtedly are some persons who never lose their own identity, and always preserve the freshness of their natures uncontaminated by example. Whatever has been written or said upon the virtues of ingenuousness and simplicity, as being the growth of the country exclusively, I have seen them flourish in the breasts of the dwellers among men in as great perfection ; witness my good friend Cino, and many others :—but what have we here ? See ! behold that young stranger, whose air and deportment are so singularly fine.”

The eyes of the painter were immediately directed to a youth, who was leaning against a marble column ; his figure, though fragile, was commanding ; and, although in his form time had not strung the sinewy force of the muscles,

the indication of their potency was there; like some of those beauteous sketches of the chisel which impress the conception only, of what the perfected work will become, and yet leave nothing to regret.

“What a position of the head!” exclaimed Cino; “what a noble turn of the throat! it is ideal beauty personified.”

A murmur of who is he? and from whence? rose through the crowd, which separated to make way for him. Ildegarda started with an exclamation of surprise as he approached; and when she extended her hand to him, the youth, on bended knee, bowed low upon, without presuming to raise, that beauteous hand to his lips. Rachaela bounded forward, uttering an ejaculation of delighted astonishment.

“Can it be? is it possible? Yes! it is, it is he!”

“Who?” said each guest to the other that stood beside him;—who is *he*?”

“Oh! a new minion, doubtless, that in her love of eccentricity, the Marchesa has discovered in some unknown corner of the world, and tricked out in this magnificent attire, in order to create astonishment: she is always, you know, playing a part.”

“Pardon me,” replied Cassini, “she never does play any part, not even that which she ought to play; and I am pretty certain, that, whoever the very handsome young Signor may be, the Marchesa never saw him before.”

While these surmises, and various others, were passing on the subject of the young stranger's appearance, Rachaela became engaged with him in eager conversation; and the envious and malignant had the mortification to observe, when they retired from the “*conversazione*,” that he remained, together with Cassini and the usual knot of intimates, to partake some hours of more select society, in the company of *Il degarda*.

Few things are more grateful and invigorating to the spirits, than, after having passed a certain time in representation, to find all the extra multitude withdrawn, and those who are loved and liked, and treasured for their own sakes, alone remaining; the circle narrows, while the heart expands; and then comes that unrepressed communication of thought, that happy carelessness of expression, which acquires so much grace and power from reciprocity, and confidence of not being misinterpreted. Ildegarda now attempted to elicit something of the young stranger's history; but whenever she passed a certain point, he dexterously turned the conversation, or refused, with courteous denial, to answer the question she addressed to him.

"Come," said Rachaela, taking his hand, "you must, you shall be Edoardo; notwithstanding all these fine garments. But where can you have procured them?" said she; "I

did not know that thou hadst a *scudo* in the world."

"Alas!" replied he, "I know but too well I must be Scaramuccio or Edoardo: but you need not (colouring and smiling as he looked affectionately at her), *you* need not, my Rachaela, remind me of my unhappy state: suffer me, at least, while I am in this society (bowing to Ildegarda), to imagine myself not unworthy of that honour. These garments and these jewels are not unfairly worn, believe me; but it will be a long while ere they again decorate my person. They are put on this night in honour of you, Marchesa; but, till I can prove my right to them, I request that Rachaela would wear this portion at least for my sake;" and, at the same time, he took a valuable chain from his neck and passed it round Rachaela's.

"Not so, not so, dear Edoardo; I will not rob you of these costly ornaments: what right have I to wear them? I am the creature of the Sig-

nora's bounty, possessing much more than I merit in that I have obtained her affection ; but such glittering gems as these,—oh, no ! they suit not my estate ; and above all, could I take them from thee, I should at once prove myself unworthy of them."

"Hush ! Rachaela ; and you, Illustrissima, I implore you to entreat for me, that Rachaela should not deny me my request."

It flashed rapidly across Ildegarda's mind, that her doing so might lead to a discovery of the history of both these extraordinary beings ; and therefore she said, after a moment's pause, "Considering that you have been brought up as brother and sister, and that Rachaela once saved your life, I think that she may well accept your generous guerdon ; at all events, she may do so conditionally, till such time as you appear to claim it again." Edoardo bowed, and Rachaela consented in silence to do as she was commanded.

The Marchesa made one more endeavour to persuade him to tell her who he was, or at least what he knew of his own story. "There are none present but friends," she urged: "you need not fear to entrust us with your secret."

"Ah!" replied he, "it was this I dreaded when you bade me come here; either that I should offend, or draw down upon myself and one most precious to me, a series of distress, to which I foresee no end, save in our destruction." Then again turning to Ildegarda, "I solemnly swear to you, lady, that I know not, myself, who I am; and such part of my story as I am acquainted with is involved in so much mystery, and can be so little satisfactory to others, while it may prove of serious consequence to my very life to divulge that little,—that I trust you will see me excused in declining all further converse on this subject."

"It is enough; I will not now or ever resume my request, so long as it proves painful to you

to gratify my curiosity—suffer me rather to say my interest. But why will you not at least live in our society, in the society of Rachaela? You shall have an apartment in my palace, and enjoy all that precious liberty which you seem to prize so highly, and which I honour you so much for prizing.”

“Illustrissima, most generous, and most kind! you distress me by your goodness; but how could the unknown and ragged Scaramuccio, with his matted locks and wild manners, how could he be a suitable inmate for the Marchesa Gherardesca? My present attire is only a disguise assumed for the evening; it must be laid aside when I quit ~~your~~ presence, perhaps for ever:—besides——besides——”

“Ah! there lies the impediment to my wishes; some secret motive influences you, in addition to that you have expressed.”

“Well, lady, if you compel me to be yet more explicit, I acknowledge that, besides an

insuperable bar which prevents my acceptance of your gracious offer, I would not live in a splendid palace, eating the bread of idleness, and wasting the hours which ought to be given to noble darings or manly pursuits, in sloth or pleasure. I would not lay on beds of down, or apply my fingers to the lute; while I have youth and vigour to inure myself to a life of hardship, and to the hope of preparing for some hour when I may exercise my arm in deeds of glory."

He paused, as it would seem, from a fear of offending, not from having uttered all he had to say. Ildegarda, too, remained silent; she felt that she had learnt more from this youth than she had ever done from all the talent and science of the day. She learnt to know that honour and renown cannot be conferred by the smiles of a woman, or the favour of the great, however distinguished that woman may be in mind or in situation; and she fully understood, for the first time in her existence, that immortal honours

are only to be obtained by individual labour, by forbearance from the pamperings of vanity, and, above all, by a life of self-denial, and a dignified, though not an apathetic, endurance of privations. Women, like monarchs, generally live in a false estimate of their own powers; the world at large find it their interest to deceive them:—but now the object stood before Ildegarda, who told her she could do nothing for him, though he was poor, and of unknown origin. The new and brilliant light, which thus, for the first time, presented itself in all its clearness to her view, opened, as it were, a new world before her. Very beautiful he was in his youthful magnificence of person, but still more surprising in the overmastering majesty of his independent spirit, which thus, in all the greenness of its vigour, spread forth a mingled grace and strength, which made Ildegarda, for the first time, become that character in reality, which hitherto she had but imagined herself to be. After a considerable pause, she said,

“ I am your friend. Be mine—it is all I ask. And now let this eventful night (for such it has been to me) be closed with music : Rachaela, your lute.” She obeyed, and sang as follows :—

THE LONELY ONE.

When I am gone, the sun will shine,
As in its wonted sheen,
The trees put on their summer pride,
The fields their robes of green ;
And none for me shall wail or moan,
Or cry, alas ! the day she's gone.

The flowers shall bud, the streams shall flow
As brightly as before,
And living things be all as gay,
As they were heretofore :
But—What am I ? I'm all alone,
And none will care though I am gone.

The birds will sing, the flocks will play,
The bee its honey make ;
The painted fly, in light robes gay,
Its flowery guerdon take ;
And though I lie beneath the stone,
Not one will think of her that's gone.

The storms will rage on tempest wing,
The rivers burst their bound,
The winds in circling eddies fling
The scatter'd leaves around ;
But none will think, when I am gone,
Of her who sings this lonesome moan.

Winter will pass, and vernal spring
In due succession turn,
With all its fair enamelling ;
And Heaven's bright lamps will burn ;
But none will look, when I am gone,
Less pleased on these ; ah, no ! not one.

Another race, another year,
Another shall pass by,
And those to whom I once was dear,
Like me will fade and die ;
But few, like me, when I am gone,
Will not leave one to make their moan.

This was my lone-desponding song,
When, lo ! a sound pass'd by,
Such as is heard sweet dreams among,
In childhood's purity ;
And then I blush'd to make such moan,
And hoped that it was heard by none.

Unhappy soul ! look up from earth,
That far-off land to see,
Where man shall own a second birth,
In immortality ;
Where sighs are hush'd by every one,
And pining grief is known to none.

Edoardo took the lute from Rachaela's hands,
and having struck a few bold chords to the
great astonishment of his auditors, he sang as
follows :—

THE WARRIOR'S LAY.

Oh ! lady, since to thee are known
The ills of life,
Its cares and strife,
And ere thy matin ray is flown,
Ere yet thy blooming beauty's blown,
The veil of sorrow clouds thy charms,
And care around thee wraps her withering arms ;

Who, then, shall henceforth dare complain,
Since virtue's slighted,
And beauty's blighted ?
Oh ! Fortune of thy fickle reign
Welcome to me th' embattled plain,
The helm of steel, th' ensanguined blade,
Where dead and dying hosts in mingled heaps are laid.

Welcome to me the glorious sound
Of clanking steel
And trumpets' peal,
Where casques and gauntlets strew the ground :
When dying groans are breathed around ;
" Fight to the death ! " the wounded warrior cries,
And fighting, shouts the word—and, shouting, dies.

Yes ! glory, on thy track I fly ;
Blazing bright,
The fiery light
Bids me follow, fight, and die :
Thousand swords are waved on high ;
Welcome, then, glory, till my latest breath,
And welcome, welcome thrice, a glorious warrior's
death !

CHAPTER IV.

'Tis not the loss of Love's assurance ;
It is not doubting what thou art ;
But 'tis the too, too long endurance
Of absence which afflicts my heart.

Campbell.

DURING many a day after this evening was past, Ildegarda dwelt upon the various thoughts to which it had given birth. Not in the actual moment of any occurrence do we appreciate truly the joy or sorrow which it brings; but only on subsequent reflection do we view it in all its bearings, or justly estimate its consequences. The mystery which enveloped Buonajuto and Rachaela, kept alive the most intense and ever varying interest: frequently did the Marchesa press Radegonda to declare whatever

she knew concerning them ; but the latter sometimes pleaded total ignorance, sometimes evaded the subject with a dexterous allusion to others which were still nearer the heart of Ildegarda.

Few and far between were the visits of Rani-
nieri, and Ildegarda's spirits drooped under his protracted absence. "Why," said she, "should the best hours of my youth waste away in this sickness of the heart, this anathema against all enjoyment? My faculties are rendered useless, my powers of benefiting others palsied, my own advantages self-contemned; I see and know my disease, but I know no cure. After all, if he loved me, would he not represent the matter to his mother in such a forcible manner that she would feel compelled to yield her consent to his wishes? At all events, he would not suffer so much time to elapse without seeing me: ah, no! he does not love as I do. Where is my pride? where is the indignation I ought to feel at this conviction? Oh! heart,

heart ! thou hast brought all into captivity—
Ildegarda is a slave !”

It would have been relief to have thus poured forth her feelings to any answering sympathy ; but while they ravaged her breast in silence, she also shared in those of which Rachaela indulged the full expression.

“ Could I but meet Edoardo again !—to have found only to lose him ; to have seen and known him such as he surely is in reality—a proud and noble creature ; to be separated from him for ever, is it not very hard ? But it is not his gallant bearing, or beauteous seeming, which enchant me :—no ! I would rather behold him in his beggar’s dress, than all the great of the land in their costly garbs. Come with me, and let us go in quest of him ; he promised to be ready whenever I should call upon him, and I am sure he has quaint spirits waiting to execute his orders ; come with me, dear Radegonda.”

The tender nurse, ever prompt to comply

with any wish of Rachaella's, was soon equipped to attend her; and they took their way first to the Piazza del Duomo, but in vain; to the Fontana,—he they sought was not there; to the Santa Caterina, alike without success: at length, returning up a narrow alley, Rachaella espied one of the boys who was usually in attendance upon Buonajuto. She questioned him narrowly, but could obtain no other answer than a shrug of his shoulders, and a "*Chi sa.*"

"You shall be taken up for a vagabond," threatened the old Radegonda, "if you do not immediately give us the information we seek."

"Ah, ah!" said the boy, "I shall be taken up when you can catch me, but that will not be now;" and off he darted, and was quickly beyond pursuit.

After a tedious, unsatisfactory walk, Rachaella and Radegonda returned to the Palazzo, dispirited, and without any success. They were met by Maestrillo; "What," said

he, "have you been taking Lanterne for *Luc-cioli*, expecting to find that ragamuffin, that Scaramuccio, still in Pisa? Bless me! I am called a fool; but should I ever have proved myself to be such an one as you have? Do not you know that thieves will not stand still to be caught, so long as they have a pair of legs to run away? and do you imagine that Intingolo is not far enough off, before this time, to turn his finery into gold?"

"Saucy prate!" rejoined Radegonda, "who asked thy opinion?"

"I never wait to be asked; I am too generous for that; I always give my wits at as cheap a rate as other folks do; and so, old mother whalebone, I will tell you that it is a fortunate circumstance my poor Signora's *caprizias* are not always gratified. If she has any more young vermin about her, my life for it, her granaries will soon be destroyed."

"And I foresee," said Radegonda angrily,

“that if thy life pays for thy impertinence, it will be no more than thou deservest.”

“Whoo!—how high the wind blows!—listen! why all the ships in Leghorn harbour will have slipped their cables: the witches are abroad, I perceive; and it is time for good spirits to hide themselves from their evil influences,” rejoined Maestrillo, sideling away.

“The Marchesa calls you, Signoras,” said Bruno Grillo, from the top of the staircase; “why do you linger? she is impatient for your return.”

“Well, what news of Edoardo?” were Ildergarda’s first words to them, when they entered her presence.

“Alas! none;” cried Rachaella, casting herself down in a seat, wearied and dispirited; “I fear, I much fear—”

“What? not that he has been imposing upon us, I hope?”

“No, no! the stars are not purer in their

courses than that dear boy ; but there is an evil spirit that persecutes both him and me."

"My own Rachaela, why talkest thou thus ? Evil spirits have no power, save what they are permitted to have ; and thou art too good not to feel safe under that great ruling Providence, who cares for all his creatures. It is the wicked alone who are subject to the power of the wicked. Do not suffer the wildness of your imagination to run away with your reason."

"'Tis well, lady ;—but there are a great many secrets surrounding us which cannot be accounted for ; and those who consider every thing materially, and with the strength of their own unassisted reason alone, are further from true knowledge than they suspect : the mason must use his trowel, but what would the trowel do without the mason's directing hand ?"

"My dear strange Rachaela, I will not dispute with you ; I shall not persuade you : who was ever convinced by an argument ? and least of all

such imaginative creatures as you are?—But how feel you inclined for a ride to the Serchio in the fresh hour of evening ; perhaps, we may hear some tidings of him you seek,—was it not one of his haunts ?”

“ Most true, dear, honoured Signora : how kind in you to have remembered that !”

“ Messer Cino, and Zanobi,—and perhaps Ranieri, will accompany us thither,” added Ildergarda. And Rachaela heaved a sigh of pleasure.

When the freshness of the sea breeze was wafted up the Arno, the mules were in readiness, and the party set forth, attended by Maestrillo and Bruno Grillo only.

There is something in the mere presence of a beloved object which diffuses a charm on every other person and thing, animated and unanimated. After an absence, more particularly when the thirsty heart has been withering in that parched existence, how refreshingly does the voice, the air, the manner of these we love, come across

our being ! what a renovation of existence ! An interchange of looks had sufficed to re-assure Ranieri and Ildegarda that their mutual faith was unbroken, and then the whole world to them was as it would be if all were love,—a very Heaven of brightness.

Cino and Zanobi could converse of nothing but Buonajuto ; they were unwearied in their praises of him.

“I have already introduced him,” said the painter, “as one of Joseph’s brethren, in my sketch for a fresco.”

“And I,” said the poet, “have made him the hero of a ballad.”

“Who knows,” rejoined Cino, “that he may not be a hero yet, in good earnest. Do you know I have taken that boy’s horoscope ; and a very extraordinary one it is : he is born under the sun.”

“Why, for the matter of that, so are we all,” cried Maestrillo ; “and, though the moon in-

terfered with my birth a little, as they tell me, I do not see why I should not be a hero too. Pray, Messer Cino, did you ever cast my nativity? I am sure you would find it a very pretty job."

"Ah! observe—there it is—thus I am interrupted," rejoined Messer Cino, addressing Zanobi; "because Aries is in conjunction with Libra, every word that I utter this day will be sure to be marred by a foolish observation: for the house of Mars is troubled by Jupiter, who has, nevertheless, the ascendant: I am born under Jupiter; and for that very reason I am now riding between you and Maestrillo at this very moment. This circumstance, trifling as it may appear, is, like every other, under the appointed government of the stars: it could not have happened yesterday, or to-morrow; it could only have taken place this very day. Mars, however, is lord of the ascendant; and the planets ♀ and ♂ must be considered the

most powerful at this ingress, being both dignified with house and triplicity ; and Mars, moreover, is in the seventh house of the estival figure ; so that we must naturally expect this will be a quarter of much bustle and activity in many parts of the world."

" Ah ! it is very like," answered Zanobi, without understanding a word of what had been said. " Do you know I had an extraordinary vision last night,—for I call these things visions, or, it may be, dreams—and I wrote down all that I was ordered to write, and it made one of the most sublime poems you ever read, although now that it is written I declare there are many parts which I cannot at all understand."

" I can perfectly believe you ; for you are of a fiery Trigon, and whatever is under a fiery Trigon when the moon is under the succedent house of the western angle, is always liable to be disturbed under the same \odot , made in the watery Trigon."

"There now," interrupted Maestrillo, "that accounts for Radegonda's having spilled all the *minestra* this morning: she, you see, was sitting at the window, and forgot that the broth was on the fire; whereupon, up bubbled the watery Trigon, and put out the fiery one, and destroyed my collation: only admire how learned I am in astrology; all fools are astrologers, you know, because their wits are in the moon; and all astrologers are fools for going to the stars to look for a fool's brains."

"There now, again," rejoined the good-humoured Cino, more delighted than offended, because Maestrillo's talk confirmed what he had foretold: namely, that he should be troubled by him all day. "Did I not tell you so? hear how the fellow prates; yes, Sir, this is *his* day exactly—let me see!" making computations on his fingers how long his power was to last.

"But you do not listen to me," cried Zanobi? "I was telling you of some very curious

objects that were presented for my perusal and observation. I did not compose these works; they were shown to me, and I wrote them down. Truly, I never beheld a wilder thing; my hair stood on end while I was writing, and a cold sweat poured down my limbs. Depend upon it, Signor, it is under such impressions alone that fine works of art are produced. If a man thinks he can do these things of himself, he is quite mistaken; he must be lifted up as it were, and give himself over to the master that works within him. I will tell you how my sensation first began, when these inspired dreams came over me. Methought I could rise from the earth at pleasure; not by means of wings or with any flying motion, but by mere volition could sustain myself in air. No one could credit me when I declared the fact to them, but before a whole room full of people I have at times executed this act: and with this power came also the imagery which I have described

in my poem. If these things are not more generally understood, and tasted at present, it is because men's minds are debased in matter—tangible, visible substances: but there will come a time when even this lower earth will be inhabited by a different race of beings, more ethereal, more sublimized; then the higher perfectibilities of the human species will be brought forth, as figures start upon the panel, or come forth out of blocks of marble. How do they do so?—by the spirit that calls them; every thing we name material is instinct with life, form, colours, beauty, if we knew to evoke these to appear. I am laughed at for these doctrines I know; but they make me happy, and I yield with submission and implicit faith to the power that guides me.” Rachaela, who had been an enchanted listener to all this mystical conversation, now ventured to say,

“How very delightful is it to hear you! this is exactly the sort of communion which

I can understand, for I feel precisely what you describe."

"True," rejoined Cino, "you are a creature of the most spiritualized matter I ever beheld; that all comes of your being born under Mercury. I never saw impressed on any one's appearance, a greater aptitude for all the arts: there it is; observe that fine delineation of the point of the nose, neither angular nor obtuse. The under lid of the eye also, that double line so distinctly traced: very extraordinary, very extraordinary indeed. I do not speak to flatter you, that is not my way. Yes, yes; Sol was in Aries, and Mercury had the ascendant when you were born. That accounts for it, Signora, depend upon it."

They were now arrived at the river's brink; and Ranieri and Ildegarda, who had suffered their mules to linger on the road, came up with the rest of the party.

"We will alight!" said the latter, "and

wander in this sylvan scene; for I love to enjoy its beauty, without the trouble of guiding my mule, or having any thing to disturb the gentle current of thought and feeling which it inspires. It is quite a scene suited for the golden age. I doubt, Messer Cino and Zanobi, if any of your highest visions ever equalled this reality: observe those maples, and those aspens, with their delicate foliage, trembling and fleckering across the pale clear sky, while the notched dark tufts of the elder fill up the foreground; and see those large white sails coursing each other, and kissing the stream, along which they are borne so rapidly, yet so noiselessly."

"Ah!" sighed Ranieri, whispering, "like these precious moments, would that they could be arrested!" There was a sadness in this sweetness, which made them relapse into silence. Rachaela first renewed the discourse.

"Let us go," she said, "to yon Torre, near

that *paésé*. Edoardo used sometimes to pass days there ; at least, so says Radegonda. It may chance that we procure tidings of the invisible. Every way was pleasant to Ranieri and Ildegarda. They were together ; and had they possessed the whole world at that moment, it would not have added to their felicity. Joyously they followed Rachaella's light step, up one hill, down another, through olive grounds and vineyards, and along narrow lanes, till Messer Cino called loudly after them, declaring, if they went farther, they could not return to Pisa till the ensuing morning. In full content of the present moment, Ranieri wondered how any body could think of hours ; and he replied,

“ Well ! what does it matter ? come along, follow us.”

“ And a pretty confusion,” screamed Maestrello, “ there will be at the Palazzo when night comes on, and no lady returns. There will be Radegonda weeping, and, worse than

that, there will be Ermenegilda peeping, and the bats and the owls talking to her, and saying,

‘ Fine doings, fine wooings ;
Look to it, or rue it.’

The fool is not rich in fooleries for nothing. He can bestow his honours upon those who are worthy to wear them.” So saying, he lifted Ranieri’s cap off. “ See how well it fits you,” placing his own on the head of the Signor ; “ one would think you had worn it all your days.”

But none of these warnings took effect : faster and more fast did Rachaella continue to run on, and Ildegarda followed, laughing ; while Cino and Zanobi breathlessly stalked after in the rear, and declared that the Marchesa always went a step farther than was wise.

“ Do you remember our journey to Marinella’s cave ?”

“ I begin to wish I had remembered it before I set out on the present excursion.”

But as he went grumbling on, the tower

arose to view immediately before them in their path. The wild anemony and narcissus grew luxuriantly in the olive ground through which they were walking, notwithstanding all the care and labour of the husbandmen to root them from their native bed. They painted the earth with a thousand variegated hues, and filled the air with perfume. But now the party reached the building.

“ Ah !” said Ildegarda, “ I would rather call it Torre del Paradiso than Torre del Diavolo, as I hear it is designated.”

They passed under a decayed archway into an open place that had been once a court ; some fragments of sculpture lay scattered about, apparently pertaining to a more remote time than that of the rest of the building. A fount of elegant workmanship, but which no longer played, stood in the midst of this area, and was nearly concealed by weeds ; but in Italy
“ *the very weeds are beautiful.*”

Nothing disturbed the silence of the scene,

save the rushing of the river, and the sound of their own footsteps, as they startled the harmless lizard from its rest.

“Where are you leading us, Rachaela?” said Zanobi, who was a cautious personage, and one who was not covetous of hair-breadth escapes, although he would have borne his part in dangers bravely, if requisite. “This is a wild country; and it would have been as well to have had half a dozen of the Marchesa’s idle serving-men here, if she were bent upon wandering about all night in this suspicious place.”

No one heeded these observations, and the parties continued to move rapidly forward, till turning round a broken part of the wall, they suddenly came upon one of those buildings inhabited by the peasants, for which there is no name in English; every idea associating with that of a hamlet, or cottage, or farm-house, is totally unlike the thing; and every circum-

stance which constitutes the comfort, cleanliness, and order of the latter, would despoil the former of all its wild grace and picturesque romance. The mixture of wood and stone which composed this building, the open galleries above, and the arcades below, the painted walls, the niche for a Madonna, the lamp burning before the rude but not inelegant shrine, the Indian corn hanging like a golden fringe round the roof, the fruitage laid out beneath to dry, the rind of the huge water-melons, converted into vases and baskets, and mingled with the rude implements of husbandry; formed a picture with which Cino, under any other circumstances than the present, would have been enchanted. Rachaela called wildly upon Edoardo, but no one answered, and the entrance of the door was fastened up; and it appeared that, for the present, it was deserted by its inhabitants.

"We will wait," said Rachaela, "while some of our party go in search of the owners of this

house ; and since we have come here, will not return without obtaining information respecting him we seek."

"Humbly am I of opinion," said Zanobi, "that it is not prudent to remain here ; for you know that bad characters are abroad at present, and that the late disbandment of the mercenary troops has occasioned more bloodshed and robbery than has been heard of for years. It is humbly my opinion, Lady, that you had much better return to your palace as quickly as you can."

"I am glad," replied Ildegarda, "that such is your *humble* opinion, for, believe me, I shall not pay to it the least attention ; very soon the owners of this house will appear, and I shall await and question them."

Night had stolen on, and already had the most brilliant moon shed around that translucent light, which conveys, even to the least sensitive minds, some touch of its soothing tranquillity.

“How beautifully it sleeps on the current of the river, and shines through the transparency of the aspen leaves, already of a silvery hue, making them sparkle with light ! how broadly it spreads its soft brilliancy over the adjacent plain !” Thus did Cino express his sense of admiration, nor was it less intensely felt by those who witnessed its charm in silence.

“Well,” cried Maestrillo, shivering, “this heavy dew is very unwholesome for fools, whatever it may be for wise people ; so I will even make bold to enter the house, and save myself from its influence.” Saying which, he took up a log of wood, and applying it lustily to the door, it was dashed open, and discovered a low stone arched room, the walls of which were black with smoke ; two narrow wooden tables were placed on each side ; a lamp hung from the roof, and a copper jug was on the board, with some remnants of a feast, and the broken blade of a large knife. The Marchesa entered to

examine the place; in doing so, she stumbled over something that entangled her footsteps, and fell rudely to the ground before any one of her escort could prevent her fall. She moaned, and was considerably hurt; but, being raised up, was, in a few minutes, able to speak, saying her accident was nothing, merely the pain of having turned her foot under her; "But what has thus dyed my garment?" and, going out by the light of the moon, she saw it was the stain of blood—"Merciful Heaven!" she exclaimed, "what can this mean?"

"Why it means, to be sure," exclaimed Maestrello, "that if we do not run away we shall all be murdered! See here!" lifting up a garment.

"Ah!" screamed Rachaela, "Edoardo's cloak; then, indeed, he is no more!" and she fell flat on her face, as if an arrow had pierced her heart; and so it had, for the arrow of such a shock as she received is sure to reach its mark. The distress and alarm was now general throughout

every individual of the party : a light was called for—where could one be found ? Bruno Grillo recollected the Madonna at the door, and seizing the lamp which adorned her shrine, without ceremony, brought it to their aid. Rachaela soon recovered from the faint, but her senses wandered ; and she uttered incoherent sentences. “ He told me that if I insisted upon his going to the Marchesa’s, some terrible event might ensue : it has ensued ; and Edoardo is murdered—murdered by me, his sister, his playfellow, his only relation. Never, never shall I forget his look ! it will haunt me night and day ! The evil one,” she added, shuddering convulsively, “ the evil one is not to be appeased ! Poor unfortunate, beloved, but lost mistress ! ” and she threw herself into Ildegarda’s arms, and wept bitterly. This burst of sorrow appeared, however, to relieve her ; and, as soon as she was sufficiently composed, Ildegarda said—

“ Now, dear one, do not allow yourself to be

thus borne away by your fears. These garments may not be Edoardo's; they are precisely those of every peasant, and even should they be his, they may have fallen into some animal's blood, which may have been slaughtered here."

Rachaella shook her head mournfully; and bitterly did Ildegarda lament not having listened to the advice of those who urged her to return, ere this fatal discovery had been made; but there was nothing now to be done, save to await the return of Maestrillo, who had been despatched for assistance to the Borgo, where the mules had been left, and to endeavour hereafter to elucidate these mysterious and terrific circumstances: while she busied herself in endeavouring to cheer Rachaella, the most serious apprehensions took possession of her own mind.

"Hush!" said Ranieri, whispering, "I hear voices—men's voices—it is as well that we place you in concealment till such time as we know what manner of persons they are. In

the far end of this long dark room, behind those casks, we may remain concealed;" and he hurried Rachaella and Ildegarda there. Zanobi and Cino lost no time in placing themselves in a similar concealment; and the Marchesa remembered her own page, and drew him along with her, although the brave-spirited creature would have remained quietly where he was. "You forget that your being seen, would discover us all." He then acquiesced in silence.

Now," said Ranieri, blowing out the lamp, "be still! move not, nor speak, until we can ascertain whether our courage or our prudence be of most avail."

Nearer, and nearer, came the tread of footsteps; a murmuring of voices rose and fell; till, at length, they distinctly heard one man say—

"I am sure I saw a light."

"Oh! it was only the gleaming of the fire-flies."

“What, do you think I take *lucioli* for *lanterne*,” answered another. “I am sure I saw a light, depend upon that. I doubt not the old fox is in her den; but we will have her, she shall not trick me out of my dues.”

“Ah! Jacopo,” screamed a shrill female voice, “Did I not tell you what you would all come to, if you made it a practice to frequent this place? why these are the lights that have always rose and vanished in the same manner. There is no living person here, depend upon it.

“Oh! oh! for the matter of that, devil or no devil, we will have some of her heart’s blood,” and they laughed hoarsely. “Ay, ay, *monte pulciano chiano, chiano*; have it we will, and drink till it be day. But look, Pipo—why, the door is open. Some one has been here before us;—and I smell the lamp—it is just put out; see, it is smoking still.”

“Oh! Jacopo, Jacopo, why do you persist in this mad scheme?” rejoined the female;

“you will be discovered, as sure as my name is Pica; and then your limbs will be stuck up in the Apennines to feed the crows.”

At this moment, Zanobi staggered against one of the barrels behind which he was concealed, and away it rolled.

“*Chi va là! chi va là!*” demanded the men who had just arrived; and drawing their knives, they rushed forward. Ildegarda exclaimed, “Have mercy upon two defenceless women!” and, starting towards them, threw herself across their path. “I am very rich,—I will pay you an immense ransom,—do not murder us!” At the same moment, torches were observed gleaming behind the trees.

“Oh!” cried the female voice, “now we are undone! Santa Maria protect us! *misericordia! misericordia!*”

Ranieri, who had darted forth after Ildegarda, stood up with his arms outstretched before her.

“ *Che diavolo !*” said the peasants ; “ what is the meaning of all this ?”

“ Oh ! save us,” reiterated Ildegarda, “ if you are, as I trust is possible, good, harmless peasants, and not, as we had imagined, banditti. Oh ! speak quickly.”

“ *Eh come !*” in a voice of astonishment ; “ I am Jacopo Serassi, and this is my brother Pipo, and our mother Pica ; and here is Madelena, the *sposina*.”

“ Blessed be all the saints !” said Zanobi ; “ and so ends this tragedy.”

“ And blessed be all the stars !” cried Cino ; “ for if the nodes of Mercury had not been in our favour, this could not have turned out as it has done ; but that accounts for it.”

Maestrillo now came, and two or three people with him, bearing torches. The wine-house was in a blaze of light, and the parties reciprocally viewed each other with astonishment ; but explanations quickly ensued, and all were satisfied

excepting the old woman. She kept perpetually pulling her daughter-in-law by the sleeve, and whispering. "Do not hold them; do not touch them, I say; they bode us no good: let us be-gone, we have nothing to do here. Let them go away as quickly as possible, for we shall rue the day they ever came, mark my word for it."

"Ah! stay Pica, and let us look at these beautiful Signoras; I will not go yet. Jacopo, speak to your mother."

"But," said Ildegarda, taking the men aside, while she left Rachaela in the care of the young woman, "what means this blood-stained garment?" pointing to that of Edoardo, "and this broken knife, the handle of which was rolled up in the cloak?"

"Ah!" cried Jacopo and Pipo, in a melancholy tone of voice, "that is Edoardo's cloak, sure enough." This they said in such a natural way, and with an expression of so much kindly

concern, that it was not possible to entertain a suspicion for a moment that they had any part in so foul a transaction.

“When did you last see Buonajuto?” questioned Ildegarda.

“A few nights ago,” was the reply.

“And where did he say he was going to?”

“Oh! nobody ever asked him any questions. It is plain, Signora, you did not know Intingolo. What! ask him questions?” and they looked and laughed at each other: “you might as well ask the luccioli where they are going to: but he was a good boy, for all that—we all loved him.”

“Not I,” said the old woman; “I neither liked Marinella nor him.”

“Ah! good mother,” rejoined Madelena, “you know very well Scaramuccio always did you some good turn or other. Do you remember when you lost your best kerchief, how he

brought you a new one?—there, there, do not speak so, for shame. No! it is my opinion, that if any evil deed has been committed, it has been done by the old one herself; but, San Benedetto! to have murdered him! no, I cannot believe it. We will all try to find out whether this is really the case or not—or, at all events, to know how this broken knife and this blood came here; and if we find that any one has really harmed the poor boy, they shall pay the price of their crime.”

“Remember,” said Ranieri; “that the first man who brings me tidings of Edoardo’s safety, shall have a hundred scudi as a reward.

“Never, never shall we hear of him alive!” exclaimed Rachaela, who had stolen forward and listened to the conversation.

“Ah!” cried Pipo Serassi, “he was an odd soul, that is true;—but, Santa Caterina! to murder the poor boy! I cannot believe it, it is too dreadful; only she never loved him truly, not what

I call loving, though he was her own son (although some say he was not)."

"Do you, then, really suppose she murdered him?" said Rachaela, in a low and tremulous voice.

"Suppose it!" rejoined Pica; "yes, I am sure of it. Did I not see, as plain as I see you, a long figure wrapped in a red cloak,—it might be scarlet, it might be flames, for ought I know to the contrary;—did I not see it close by me when I was dressing the vines? and always before any dreadful event, have I not always seen that figure? Besides, I have had dreams, heard voices, and had warnings concerning this terrible place; and I always told Jacopo that he never should marry Madelena until he forswore his horrible practice of drinking in this wine vault, which is not like any other wine vault in the world."

"Nay, now, dear mother, you know you allowed, yourself, that the wine was excellent; and

you remember how merry we all were on St. Thomas's day."

"Come, come away, my dear Rachaela; it is high time that we return to poor Radegonda: think on the anxiety she is enduring on our account. I have taken every possible step to enquire into this affair, and I trust that you will find it as I tell you; at all events, to protract our stay here at present is unavailing."

Rachaela suffered that Ildegarda should lead her away: they soon retraced their steps, and found their mules awaiting them; but the pleasure of this excursion had been, as is too often the case, exchanged for a sentiment of alarm and mourning.

CHAPTER V.

PISA'S DISGRACE.

Better to fall in arms beneath the foe,
And leave a lasting name,
Than reckless of the heritage of fame,
Sink lowly down in bitterness of shame,
And waste without a blow..

Venice.—Mr. Sotheby.

THE next morning, early, Ranieri requested to be admitted to Ildegarda's presence: matters of moment caused him to disturb her, he said, at an undue hour; a strange adventure had befallen him, and he wished to have her advice and assistance. She expressed her sympathy in all that interested him; and he spoke as follows:

“ When I reached my palace last night, and

was alighting from my horse, a wretched looking beggar adjured me by every thing I held dear, to give him charity; I did so, and was hastily passing him to go into the vestibule, when, catching my horse, he said, in a low hurried voice—

“ ‘ We are observed here: but if you would save your country from disgrace, lose not a moment; haste to the arcades of the Borgo, and stop under the fourth arch on the left hand.’

“ ‘ There was something singularly impressive in the voice and address of the person who spoke thus, and I accepted the invitation. I had not been many minutes arrived at the appointed place, when a soldier, with his vizor down, approached, and walking by my side for a few paces in silence, suddenly stopped, and said in a whisper—

“ ‘ I trust to your honour, and I rely on your energy: the most shameful compact of avarice and treachery is now making to sell Volterra

to the Pisans. If you doubt my word, there is a witness (at the same time giving me a letter) which will vouch for the truth of my assertion. Scacchieri, the cousin of Montescudajo, and all the chief of the Raspanti faction, have bribed Bochino di Belfrédotte, that mean tyrant of Volterra, to barter his country for a sum of money; and shortly this disgraceful compact will be fulfilled.'

"The speaker paused to examine the effect his words produced upon me. 'If, indeed, this intelligence be correct,' I said, 'then is the glory of Pisa laid low.' My informer proceeded:

"Your friend the Marchesa has much in her power; and though her family have hitherto always supported the Raspanti's, her own opinion of justice has frequently induced her to favour the other faction; and, at all events, it is well known, that in every noble cause she would espouse that of the wronged party. Her power and wealth will ever be exerted in behalf of vir-

tuous liberty ; and having committed the secret of this disgraceful transaction to you, Signor, I have only to add that I place equal confidence in the Gherardesca. To you and to the Signoras, therefore, I appeal, and am persuaded all further words are unnecessary to induce you to save your country from the most disgraceful stain which can sully the annals of a nation ; namely, the barter of human beings for gold.’

“ Having thus spoken, my informer walked quickly away, and left me rooted to the spot with indignation and amazement.”

“ This is news to stir the spirit, truly,” exclaimed Ildegarda. “ What ! shall it be said that we are the buyers of human flesh ? Shall Pisa be called the mart for slaves ? Pisa, which was once the refuge for the oppressed—whose streets teemed with all nations—whose ports were free to all commerce—and now to be reduced to this,—to purchase from a tyrant a noble but oppressed race, for gold ? The whole blood of

the Gherardescas rushes to my heart with fiery scorn at the thought. Was it for this my ancestors fought and bled? was it for conduct such as this they were crowned with unfading laurels? But my indignation, what is it? *my* power, how circumscribed! Say, Ranieri, what wilt *thou* do?"

"My arm is single, lady, and can effect little. Troops and gold are what Volterra requires."

"Of the latter," said Ildegarda, "I have enough; and quickly shall it be shared with those brave unfortunates. The mercenary troops, at least, which now abound in our divided and distressed land, may be by this means procured to fight for them. But who will stand forth to act in this perilous moment, and render such aid as I can give effective?"

"Were I alone in the world, how gladly would I offer the last of my blood and my breath to be the dispenser of your bounty, the creature of your service!" replied Ranieri. "But,

Ildegarda, I have a mother, and you know how dear she is to me : can I take upon myself to incur the certain displeasure of the Anziani ? banishment—sequestration of property—or, it may be, death—without informing her of the risk I run ?—her to whom, next to Heaven, I feel myself indebted for life ?”

Ildegarda paced the apartment in great agitation ; then stopping suddenly, she said, “ There is but one way to act in all doubtful cases ;—the open forward plain path is that to choose. Haste to the Lanfreducci ; lay the matter before her ; appeal to her nobleness of character ; represent the transaction to her, as it must appear in the eyes of every unprejudiced mind, and tell her it is worse to you than death to be the silent, inactive spectator of such a heinous deed. But why should I suggest to you what your own heart will dictate so much more forcibly than any words of mine can do what is best to utter on such a subject. I will despatch

Bruno Grillo and other trusty servitors to Volterra with gold : and, in the interim, will send to Montescudajo; tax him with his perfidy, shame him with the detection of his villany, and, if he has the latent seeds of remorse in his breast, I will endeavour to awaken him to repentance."

"In all that respects my own conduct," replied Ranieri, "you shall be obeyed; in all that regards the noble generosity of *yours*, admired, honoured, beloved: but in sending for the Montescudajo, weigh well the risk you incur; remember the character of the man; what will his presumption not lead him to hope, from being sent for by you; and to what dreadful extremities will his baleful revenge and hatred not instigate him when he discovers the real cause of your summons, and see himself in all his own naked deformity of character exposed to your contempt. The evils which I before named as being the probable results to myself,

I cannot bear to think of as the possible ones for you."

"Fear not for me; the mean are always cowardly; I can easily terrify him into respect for me: besides, in such an emergency as the present, all selfish considerations fade to nothing before the hope of rendering service to the distressed:—we must do that which will insure our own approbation; nought else is worth a care."

"My noble Ildegarda," said Ranieri rapturously, "if I might act in this business as my heart prompts, another night should not see me in Pisa. But the Lanfreducci must be consulted: she is my mother; who can sleep in peace that infringes that first commandment of Heaven,—the duty they owe a parent? I have the best and brightest hopes that the Lanfreducci will rise superior to the cold rules of policy, and send me forth to the oppressed."

Ildegarda looked her approbation, and in that look Ranieri was blessed.

“I leave you, then, at present ; but if, indeed, my wishes are fulfilled, I shall come to receive your commands before I depart.”

“May Heaven speed and prosper you, Rannieri ! Farewell !”

No sooner did the Conte di Montescudajo receive Ildegarda's summons, than he hastened to obey them, little suspecting the true cause which had procured him that favour. It was one, however, upon which he placed so high a value, that an ill-concealed triumph lit up his countenance when he entered her presence, and the smile around his lips was in direct opposition to the fierce flashing of his eyes. Nothing resembles the tiger more than this forced union of contradictory expression ; whenever it occurs, it is a beacon to warn the beholder of danger. Pafetta came gliding into the room, and approached to take her hand ; but was at once disconcerted by the calm dignity with which she repelled this familiarity, and not

less so by the glance of penetrating enquiry, which she cast upon him.

“Will not the Conte di Montescuadjo be seated?” pointing to a chair; “for I have a subject of some length to treat upon; and one,” she added solemnly, “which must make us friends or foes for life.”

To this address he replied in courteous phrase, and with all that studied grace and softness he knew so well how to assume; interspersing his discourse with professions of everlasting devotedness to her person, which she abruptly terminated by stating to him the details of the fact that occasioned their present interview, without, however, informing him of the channel through which it had reached her. At first he attempted to laugh the matter off, then to ridicule the notion of women’s pretending to understand such topics as that which she now entered upon; but finding that none of these contrivances availed him, the secret rage

and dismay which worked within, broke forth, and he said, imperiously, "Those who employ spies on the actions of others, must expect a retributive justice: let them look to themselves; they will have enough to think about, without busying their minds with affairs which concern them not."

"Pardon me, Signor, your observation is irrelevant to the present case. I affirm that all wives, daughters, and mothers, ought to be keenly alive to the interests of their country, if it is only through the objects which constitute these precious ties. If these are indeed dear to them, they must share in their glory or disgrace. I am a lonely woman, it is true; no one now remains to me, of all my noble and numerous ancestry: 'tis many a day since I have basked in the sunshine of family interest, or family communion,—felt strong in their strength, or prosperous in their prosperity; nevertheless, as a daughter of one of the bravest of Pisa's citizens, I must ever enter with the warmest glow

of feeling into every circumstance which redounds to the honour of my nation, or stigmatizes it with disgrace. I appeal, therefore, to you, noble Signor, whose kindred are in power, to wipe off, ere it be too late, the stain, which now rests upon their characters : suffer it not to be transmitted on the page of history, for the execration of future generations, that the Pisans, or rather Pisa's magistracy, bought the helpless Volterrans for gold."

Ildegarda ceased speaking, while every feature of her intelligent countenance played with a varying expression of interest.

Meanness shrinks before a rational and sincere enthusiasm, but such minds are not ennobled by their proximity with better feelings. There is an innate littleness of soul which owns naught save the scorpion stings of mortification at detection, and in which no higher principle is excited by the conviction of inferiority than a thirst for revenge. Such was Montescudajo's when he replied—

“ You forget, Signora, that in war, as in love, all stratagems are allowable.”

“ Detestable maxim ! as false as it is base. Besides, are we at war with these poor Volterrans ?”

“ No; but we have been, and may be again ; it is best, therefore, to unite their interests with ours : they are too insignificant a people to stand alone among the nations. We are, in fact, only consulting their welfare in attaching them to ourselves : and besides, if we do not by a timely policy turn an alliance with them to use, Florence or Siena will do so to our detriment.”

“ This is all plausible,” replied Ildegarda, “ where human beings are not the objects of bribery and barter ; but no considerations of interest, no purchase of man’s freedom for gold, can in fact be any thing but base and treacherous.

“ If these high-spirited people value their bleak independence, and have so long bravely maintained it, is it not an act of baseness to cor-

rupt a few venal hearts to sell their nobler countrymen? Can any worldly advantage be an apology for committing so low and sordid a deed?"

"You regard this affair, Signora, through an ideal medium; this argument of yours rests upon what men have agreed to call base or sordid."

"No," rejoined Ildegarda indignantly, "there is a standard for virtue and for vice, which no time or circumstance can ever change; and every human creature carries this standard in his own conscience."

"Allow me to say that all this high-sounding sentiment proceeds from imaginative maxims, which are mighty fine in theory, but which are not serviceable in practice. Look to the records of all nations; from the earliest times, you will see that they have always followed the track which they conceived to be most likely to bring them acquisitions of wealth or power; even those who have boasted most of their incorruptibility, and their strenuous

love of freedom, do not stand exempt from this general charge; in fact, can they be blamed for having so done? Does not mankind always yield to circumstances? and does not every apprentice in the school of life soon discover that self-interest is the only sure principle upon which every thing hinges, and on which all depends?"

"It is enough, Conte di Montescudajo: we have no thought or feeling in common—we cannot treat together; here let our conference end. It is such sentiments as these, encouraged and acted upon, which divides our wretched country, and gives it up a prey to tyranny and spoliation."

"Nay, Signora," affecting an air of gallantry, "why trouble your gentle soul with considerations so totally out of your sêx's province? those eyes of yours were not designed to cast forth angry glances; Love's arrows are their arms, and I swear——"

"Nay, spare yourself that useless trouble; oaths are but words, and he who regards not

the latter, will pay no respect to the former. For the last time, I ask of you.—Will you by every means in your power prevent this disgraceful and unnatural purchase? or do you at once refuse the honourable office of mediating between your relatives and your country's eternal dishonour?"

Pafetta smiled, for he always smiled when he saw his prey nearer his reach.

"You are resistless, Signora; and, to conciliate you, I will do all that you command: but you must grant me one favour in return,—allow me to renew our intercourse, already too long interrupted,—suffer me to endeavour to reinstate myself in your friendly regard."

"Upon the termination of this affair depends my esteem or scorn."

"Nay, that is not generous; for if the whole body of the Anziani have previously determined the question, am I to blame?"

"At least," replied Ildegarda, "haste away now, and prove your sincerity by your zeal;

address them as I have addressed you; they will tremble at the consequences of their crime being made public: and it will also stand on record, that some few of nobler natures existed in this wretched city, who endeavoured to assist the unfortunate and persecuted Volterrans."

"Signora, I grieve to observe that you have indulged in a belief that more is in my power than actually exists; and with all the will in the world to obey you, I must frankly express my opinion that you have framed to yourself an ideal state of the world that has no resemblance to the real one. If truth and candour, and perfect justice reigned, and each individual practised these virtues, your view of society would be correct; but as it is, alas! if a solitary individual shaped his course by such principles, he would inevitably be wrecked himself, and bring ruin on all who trusted in his guidance."

"Away! away!" cried Ildegarda, "it is i

vain we converse longer : but yet one word more—may I rely on your repeating what I have said, to your kinsmen ?”

“Certainly, if you wish it; but, to be sincere, they will only regard you as a wrong-headed woman, and myself as a mad man for listening to you.”

“Then do they deserve, one and all, to be deposed from their office.”

“Is that really your opinion, Signora, or did you speak unadvisedly ?”

“No, really, with all my heart and soul, I think and feel what I have said.”

“It is fortunate, then, that you have spoken to a friend : but remember, these are dangerous words, and might turn to your undoing, Signora, were they uttered to less devoted ears. Treason against the state is punishable with confiscation of property, and death.”

And he smiled as he fixed his fiery eyes on the countenance of Ildegarda. For the first time

she was conscious that the unrepressed expression of her feelings was highly imprudent, not only on her own account, but on that of all those most dear to her, as well as to the cause she espoused. Ildegarda trembled inwardly, but recovering her self-possession, she said,

“ You will acknowledge at least, I hope, that I wish to be your friend by warning you of the opinions of others on this disgraceful business, and that I have put it in your power to avoid the contempt which will fall on the authors of this affair, if its conclusion is not prevented in time.”

“ Excuse me, Signora, I did not quite understand you: you said, I think, that you have told me the opinion of *others*;—may I ask who those persons are? Has the refined and noble Ranieri condescended to leave his studious pursuits and to busy his thoughts with politics?”

“ Ascribe not to Ranieri,” replied Ildegarda, colouring, “ ascribe not to any individual the

words which I have uttered, and for which I alone am responsible."

"It is well, lady," Pafetta replied; "I understand you. And now I take my leave, with all courteous wishes;" saying which, he bowed, and retired.

"May Radegonda come in?" said the nurse, as the Conte di Montescudajo passed her. "Woe is me! sweet heart; I fear all is not as it should be: there is no luck in that man's eye; I had rather hear any other sound than his heavy tread. Last night the screech owl and the bat were flitting around my windows. Lady, I trust you have been wise!"

"What mean you?"

"I mean that I hope you have let no secrets out to him, the evil one. He will work thee a mischief if he can. Oh! the fates, there is something dark hanging over us; Radegonda never likes those long black floating waves that seem to rise and fall upon her eyes."

“Nay, my good nurse, shake off these fancies ; thou art not well, that is all.”

“I am not well, sweetheart ; but it is not bodily ill which I labour under,—that would be nothing. One thing is certain :—Rachælla is in a bad way ; she says her brother Edoardo is certainly murdered, and no one cares. She is upbraiding you and me, and all the world, for not making further enquiries into this matter ; then again she sits like a statue for hours, not crying or moaning, but fixed and woeful, so that my very heart aches for her. But, Signora, the country people from La Torre are come to enquire for you, and wish to have an audience : if you would see and question these good people yourself, perhaps they might tell you something which would lead to a discovery of the poor boy ; for they are much concerned about the disappearance of Scaramuccio. In truth, besides my sorrow for the sweet damsel, I have a great love for that curious fly-about boy : I have known won-

derful things of his doing. It would be a shame and a sin, if he was in any way hurt, or came to any trouble. But, oh! my sweet nursling, look to thyself likewise; be wary, in order to be enabled to serve others, for thy goodness steps before thy prudence, and mars the grace thereof."

Ildegarda felt the truth of this rebuke.

"I will see the peasants; bring them to me."

Pica Curione and Jacopo Serassi entered her presence, accompanied by the *sposina* Madde-lena: having kissed Ildegarda's extended hand, they enquired for her health, and that of the *poveretta's*, meaning Rachsaella's. "We are come also, Illustrissima, to entreat you, who are all powerful, to search out the true cause of the melancholy appearances which lead us to fear the worst for the life of Scaramuccio. We may incur much trouble and disgrace from the knife and the bloody garment, which all our country neighbours came to look at; and then they mourn the absence of their young friend, and cast an-

gry suspicious glances at us, which we cannot bear, though we are as innocent as our own *capri*; for, indeed, we would not harm a hair of his head. Often and often has he brought food to us when we have been starving, and no one knew where he got it; sometimes he would do a day's work for us, and never take any payment. Judge then, Eccellenza, if we have not good reason to love him."

"How long is it," asked Ildegarda, "since Scaramuccio has been seen amongst you?"

"Two nights ago he was with Marinella in the Torre; but what alarms us is, they are both gone, and no vestige of them remains, save the above garment, which, all stained as it is with blood, is but a melancholy remembrance; besides, I wish to tell you, Illustrissima, if I may be so bold, that this same Torre has been the very plague of my life; it was there Jacopo was constantly inveigled to meet idle companions, and to drink and——"

“For shame!” interrupted he; “what can have put it in your head to plague the Signora about our affairs? I wonder you are so bold!”

“And so you see, Illustrissima, (pushing him out of the way,) I told him he never should marry my daughter there, till he gave over his evil practices.”

“Why, as for the matter of that,” rejoined the lovely Maddelena, laughing and archly looking her lover from beneath her thickly-fringed eyelids, “you know Pica was fond enough now and then of tasting Marinella’s *aleatico*——”

“And what then?” interrogated Ildegarda; “were you so intimately acquainted with Marinella?—relate to me all you know concerning her.”

“*Eh, come!* if I knew her?—to be sure I did,” said Pica.

“Well, how did she live? and what did she do to gain her livelihood?”

“Oh! Illustrissima, as for *how* she lived—

she lived like a queen, that I can tell you; I warrant me, when the *polenta* and *minestra* failed us, Marinella ate of the daintiest fare in the land: *umidi in oglio* were her constant food. But as you seem curious about her, Signora, if you will give me leave to sit down, for I am old and weary, I will tell you all about her, from beginning to end."

"There—there is a chair—come nearer, good Pica,—now proceed."

"One night, about three years ago—ay, it was three years ago; I remember it well, for two of my best goats were killed by the lightning, the night after the *festa* of St. Antonio di Padova; for the two fine animals had been blessed by the priest that very day before, so that it was the more extraordinary—well then, the night after the *festa* of St. Antonio, there was the most terrific storm that in my days was ever seen: crish, crash! went the largest trees, and then the wind roared like the thunder; so

there was no telling which was which. You must know, there was at that time no house at the Torre ; no threshing-floor, no olive-garden ; nothing but the old ruin itself, and that, they said, belonged to some gentleman who died beyond seas, and left it in the care of a certain Marco Paolo, an attorney ; so, as I was relating, the morning after the storm, it was the finest day I ever beheld, only I was sorry at heart, for there lay my two poor beautiful goats dead at my door ; but I thought I would go to La Torre, nevertheless, to get a few of the fallen branches to make my fire ; and though nothing about the place was ever accounted very lucky to meddle with, I thought I might, nevertheless, venture to take them as they were to be burnt directly ; when lo, and behold ! while I was stripping the useless leaves off them, that they might dry the quicker, I heard a voice like the whistling of a sharp wind in my ear, ask what I was doing ? St. Benedetto ! I never shall forget

the whistler; her face was as white as a cream cheese, and her long hair, like the lint upon my spindle, streamed all over her. 'I am doing nothing at all, I can assure you,' said I, making her a low obeisance. 'Do not be frightened; what art afraid of?' she said; 'you shall have more sticks than you can carry, if you will only do as I order you. The foreign gentleman is come home, and is going to build a fine Palazzo here; and if you will only hold your tongue, and do as I bid you do, you shall be the richest *contadina* in the Paese: I am his *donna di casa*, and every thing he has is in my power. Haste, thou—wilt obey me?' I hesitated, for I was terribly frightened: but I looked round, and saw no one near, and I was still more afraid to disobey her than to follow her; so I took courage, and ran as fast after her as I was able, but could not keep pace with her, for she flew like the wind. When we came to the Torre, we went up the broken stair-case, that no human footstep had

trod for years—oh ! how my teeth chattered in my head !—and then we came to a sort of *mezzanina*, on the floor of which lay a man rolled up in a cloak : some costly garments were near him ; but his face I never saw, for he concealed that ; nevertheless, I am certain, by his fine long limbs, that he was a person of great dignity. ‘ Here are two *scudi* for you,’ said Marinella to me, ‘ if you will only sit on the staircase till I return, for I am going away for an hour or two, and watch the sick gentleman in my absence.’ I looked twice at the money, and thought of Maddelena here ; and even then I would rather not have been tempted, but I repeated two Ave-Maria’s, and then took it, and promised to do as I was ordered. ‘ Remember,’ said Marinella, in her whistling voice, ‘ do not speak to him unless he speaks to you ;’ and then away she whisked past me just like a gust of wind. Well, I had sat in many a sick room, but never in one like this before ;—

perhaps thought I, if I cough I may waken him, and he will speak to me ; so I coughed, and scratched with a stone against the wall, but the poor man only gave a groan now and then ; and glad enough I was when Marinella returned, for it was like sitting up watching a corpse without the blessed candles or holy water, or any kind of consoling thing to give one courage. When Marinella returned, she brought with her Marco Paolo, and a large basket full of various furniture and goods. They told me I might go away ; but I stopped a little while, to look about me, and I saw them put down a sort of mattress, and lay the poor gentleman thereon, and pour some cordials down his throat ;—and then they espied me, and bade me be off, and it was the last I ever beheld of the poor man, till about a month afterwards, when I saw two of the *misericordia* people carrying away his dead body, to bury it in the neighbouring church of St. Cosimato.

During the month, however, that the poor gentleman did live, great improvements were made about La Torre: the wine vault was opened, and a finer is not to be found in all Tuscany; the thrashing floor, too, was laid;—but what did it all signify to the poor gentleman? The day after his death came Marco Paolo; and having been for some hours shut up with Marinella, he went away leaving the keys with her, and she told us the territory was her own; it was left to her, she said, by the deceased; so there she was settled in a pretty property, sure enough; and in a very few days she came out completely changed from head to foot; her skin was 'brown and shining, her hair was all put away, and she wore a fine bodice, with silver chains and pearls; in short, she seemed quite another sort of creature; for my part, I could not understand it, but I thought it best to hold my tongue. Well, to go on with my story,—for it is tedious to be a long while telling a story,—

scusi, Eccellenza, for stopping to make the remark :—so—where was I?—yes, very true :—so Marinella locked and barricaded every place up afresh ; and away she went, and staid for some time. She was seen taking the road to Leghorn, but that was all one ever knew of her doing during her absence ; and when she came home again, she brought Scaramuccio with her, saying he was her son, but I never somehow believed it ; for she made him dig, and prune, and draw water, in the heat of the sun, and work a very slave : it was enough to kill such a stripling. At length, one day, before us all, he told her he would work no more, but serve her in some other way ; and accordingly he disappeared for a good while—then returned, and gave Marinella a quantity of gold, which he declared that he had earned fairly. ‘ Oh ! ’ said she, ‘ I never doubted Scaramuccio’s word, and certainly shall not upon the present occasion.’ But the boy kept back a por-

tion of the money, which he told her he would;—and what use do you think he made of it? why he went to the university school, where, in the course of time, he gained such a number of prizes, that the other boys beat and maltreated him; but that, he said, he should not have minded, were it not that the masters passed off his exercises for those of some of the Anziani's children; at which he became so enraged, that he swore he would not go to any more schools, where deceit and lies were secretly encouraged by such practices; and ever since he has led a vagabond life, sometimes coming home for a short period, and then making all the youths as idle as himself, calling them his troops, forsooth, and exercising them in various useless ways of running, leaping, swimming, as well as in mock battles, from which they often came home with broken pates. Marinella threatened, and scolded, and complained in vain, for he paid her no sort of attention; only

whenever she wept, and declared that he would be her death, then he used to swear he would never forsake her, and he gave her more gold,—the saints only know where he got it,—and she was pacified. Truly, it will be a black day to us if Scaramuccio is murdered : and now, Illustrissima, having faithfully related to you all I know concerning him and his mother, I hope you will see how terribly hard it will be upon us, if this business is not thoroughly looked into ; and as you are all powerful, you may surely discover the truth of the affair, and we shall be ever bound to pray for you.”

Rachaella now entered the room pale and agitated ; “ It is all my fault,” she exclaimed : “ he told me some desperate evil might ensue if I persisted in making him come to your *festa*, Signora, and still I did so. Oh ! I have had such visions ! Edoardo is certainly murdered. Why was I, who once preserved his life, to be the cause of his losing it ? Oh ! miserable

creature that I am! But," starting forward, "I will go to the Anziani myself; I will beg, entreat, threaten, that if they do not pursue this matter to the utmost, the vengeance of Heaven will overtake them."

"Be calm, my dear one," answered Ildegarda; "I have been making all possible enquiries of these peasants, and I will take them to bear witness of all they know: neither shall any thing be left undone, to recover tidings of the lost Edoardo."

Maestrillo cried out: "You'll burn your mouths, if you eat your *minestra* so hot: wait a little till it cools,—you'll taste it better."

"What does the fool mean?"

"Ah, ah! the fool! *scusi*, Signora, the fool's wisdom is worth the wise man's folly any time in the four and twenty hours: but I believe I have told you this before,—only a good thing cannot be too often repeated. Why, now if the boy is dead he is dead, and you will not bring

him to life again ; but you may bring the living into great trouble. If he is alive, he perhaps does not want you to make so much noise about him ; Intingolo likes to be here, there, and everywhere, but he does not want to be followed about like a child in a go-cart. Take a fool's wisdom for once ; open your eyes and shut your mouths, and the flies will not go down your throats."

"Keep your advice for more fitting opportunity, Maestrillo."

"If I do that, Illustrissima, it will not be fit for use ; too much haste runs to waste ; but, as Radegonda says, there is a medium in all things : if I kept my advice till it was asked for, it would grow as stale and musty as an old crust ; so I open the cork of my wits every now and then, and have had proofs of their being of such great efficacy on many occasions, when wise folks had not a word to say for themselves, that I shall never more be selfish enough to bottle them up for my own private use."

“Maestrillo, peace ! I command thee.”

“Blow high, blow low ! I know what I know : mark my words, you may live to repent one and all of you that my words are forbidden ; but I should be a fool indeed if I troubled myself further.” Then turning to Jacopo the peasant, he said, pointing to Maddelena, “Look to her black eyes : these are troublesome things in a man’s keeping ; they will make thy heart ache yet, friend, if they have not done so already :—when they want a bird to sing well, they put out its eyes, and clap it in a cage ; and when I have a wife that is what I will do with her. So, Signors and Signoras, Maestrillo has given you the whole wealth of his brains gratis ; it would be well if all writers would do as much :—he has nothing more to say at present—*a rivederle in Paradiso.*”

“Radegonda,” said Ildegarda, addressing her, “see, that these good peasants are well taken care of, and then return to me. Come,

Rachaela, mine own Rachaela, cheer up, I have good hope that Edoardo is safe; for the more I reason upon this business, the less likely does it seem to me, that any one should have committed so foul a deed. Edoardo was beloved,—the best defence any one can possess; there are no guards, no fortresses, so strong as those which affection places round a beloved and popular object: still I do not marvel at thy anxiety; I share it in all its glow of feeling: only, I beseech thee, restrain it, by reflecting on such circumstances as may bring consolation along with them.”

“ Ah! dearest mistress, unless you were in my heart, you could not know how impossible this is at present.”

CHAPTER VI.

THE BATTLE.

Quanto più oltre nostra vita varca
Tanto truova al cammin più duri passi
E di dannosa soma più carca ;
E poi giugnendo al nostro estremo lassi,
Quando il tornar e'l pentir poco vale,
Conosciam chiaro aver perduti i passi.

Lorenzo de' Medici.

ILDEGARDA lost no time in requesting an audience of Gamba Corta, the chief magistrate: she was instantly received; but she saw by his air of assumed consequence, and affected gravity, that the purpose of her visit was ascribed to a very different motive from the real one. When Ildegarda had laid the whole matter before him, and brought up the peasants of La Torre to

bear witness of all they knew concerning the disappearance of Edoardo—"It is highly proper, indeed," replied the suspicious Gamba Corta, "that persons of such doubtful character should be looked narrowly after, and we cannot thank the Signora Gherardesca sufficiently for the kind interest she expresses in our welfare; such wandering idle vagabonds ought to be banished from every respectable community, and their mode of existence traced to its source."

"Pardon me, Signor, you mistake totally," rejoined Ildegarda, "the meaning and spirit of this appeal to you. Whatever desire I may have had to know more of the character of this youth, I should never have applied to you, or any one else, to obtain his secret (if he has a secret) by fraud or force: the mission I came upon is one of justice, namely, to implore your assistance, and, if it be requisite, your power, to discover the true cause of the suspicious circumstances which

attend the disappearance of Edoardo; and if, indeed, there be foundation for the horrible surmise of his having been assassinated, to demand that his murderers may pay the forfeit of their crime."

"Ay! without doubt," replied Gamba Corta, coughing; "to be sure it is highly proper that it should be inquired into, not that probably the lives of this poor boy and his mother, according to your description of them, were of any consequence—that is," coughing, "I mean to the state,"—the word *state* pronounced with a consequential accent; "and if they are murdered, the *state* to be sure can be of no consequence to them;" laughing at his own wit as he uttered the latter sentence. "Nevertheless, Signora, to oblige so charming a lady as you are, or it may be to serve some friend of yours, since you show such deep interest in these obscure individuals," (and he raised himself on tip toe, to have a better chance

of examining Ildegarda's countenance), whichever it be, believe me, all due attention shall be paid to your request."

"Does it require any other interest," rejoined Ildegarda indignantly, "to induce me to press this subject on your attention, than the common interests of humanity which such a suspicion must excite in every breast? If the life or death of any of the subjects of Pisa be not an object of consequence to its chief magistrates, I know not to what end their office is appointed." The *little great* man coughed long and loud, to subdue his choler, sank and raised himself alternately from his heels to his toes, and puffed his lean cheeks out, and drew them in again, as if the words contained in his mouth would annihilate the hearer.

"Very true, Signora—you talk like one of us—like one replete with all the sentiments which govern our actions."

"Do I so?" interrupted Ildegarda, with im-

prudent impetuosity: "'tis a point at which my ambition does not aim. May I venture to augur, nevertheless, from so flattering a belief and trust in me on your part, that I am to draw a favourable conclusion to the purport of my request, and rely upon your causing immediate and vigorous investigation to be made into this affair?"

"Oh! doubtless Signora, but——"

"Pray accept this trifle," added Ildegarda quickly, blushing at being compelled to the deed, and she placed upon his extended finger a valuable gem;—"allow this ring to plead for me, and to imprint my request on the tablets of your memory."

"Bribery," she said to herself, "is not always corruption—not in the present case certainly;" and she endeavoured to silence her own scruples, with this reasoning. With better hopes that her wishes would be complied with than she had entertained previously to her conference with Gamba Corta, though not satisfied with

the very imperfect interest she had inspired, Ildegarda took leave of him, and returned to her palace.

Cassini was attending Rachaela, and watching every turn of her malady; for the shock the latter had received at La Torre, brought it on afresh; but her general habit was that of extreme nervous irritability, so that the least unusual degree of excitement turned the scale, and the total derangement of her faculties ensued, which however gradually regained composure, when the cause of excitation was removed. Rachaela, while under this destructive influence, took delight in distorting whatever was presented to her attention; and when gently reproved for her wilful misrepresentations, she looked ashamed and distressed at being compelled to acknowledge she was aware of her mistake; and seemed disposed to question the sincerity of that kindness which reduced her to resign her visions for realities :

Alas! does it require to be mad, in order to be conscious of this feeling? When Rachella looked at the lute which Edoardo played upon the night of the festa, she said it was pleasant to her to behold and to caress it, only she wished that the black ribbon which was hung to it were removed.

“It would be far better to place that round me,” she said.

“You are mistaken, *cara ragazza*,” rejoined Cassini; “that ribbon is of a very bright red; but after having had the fever which you have for many hours uninterruptedly, the eyes are often weak, and their vision is obscured or rendered deceptive; but I wish you to endeavour gradually to look at objects with a determined will to behold them as they are, otherwise we shall have you acquiring that very bad habit of seeing every thing falsely.” Then taking her hand with fatherly affection, “Come, do not allow yourself to utter what you do not really believe

is true: truth is so beautiful a medium through which to view all things, moral or physical, that the least deviation from that pure atmosphere sullies their brightness, and destroys our own genuine happiness. Now, dear girl, look well at this ribbon, and tell me of what colour is it."

"Red," she said directly; and her eyes filled with tears—"but the black is here;" and she pressed her hand on her heart.

"If you had but seen," added she; "oh! if you had but seen Edoardo's velvet eyes, when he besought me not to press him to come to the *festa* that fatal night, their gaze would pursue you, as it now pursues me, with unceasing upbraiding."

"Indulge great hopes, Rachaela, that your fears are groundless: trust me, I, like my friend Cino, read the stars in my own way, and I do firmly believe that Edoardo will yet be restored to you: but should such a misfortune as his

death, or any one of equal magnitude, ever befall you (which heaven forbid !), it is not suiting that principle of religious trust in which you profess to anchor your belief, to resign yourself a prey to despair. No! it is not, dear Rachaela, under any circumstances whatever : and it is our bounden duty to bow resignedly to suffering ;—we are not commanded *not to suffer*, but to *suffer* meekly. The only blame with which you can justly reproach yourself on the present occasion is that which you will incur by allowing your feelings to affect your health, if you persist in this, (and the power of volition is much more our own than we are willing to allow) : if you persist in this, it will render you a rebellious child to Heaven—one who will not receive loving correction ; it will also infringe on your temporal duties, by rendering you ungrateful to your benefactress, who, I can assure you, stands much in need of all your grateful kindness.”

“ Ah ! alas ! that is too true,” interrupted Rachaela, hurriedly ; “ oh ! if self-immolation could save her !”

“ Softly, my good Rachaela ; none of these violent efforts are necessary ; on the contrary, they may do her much injury. What is required on your part, is a steady natural conduct in the line which Providence has marked out for you. Soothe, delight her, and be her companion, but grieve her not by resigning yourself up to wild ungoverned passions ; these will be the means of dividing you from her society, whereas her true friends must endeavour to form an impregnable barrier around her, to guard her from insidious foes.”

“ Well do I know, my revered friend, that the Marchesa has bitter cruel enemies—enemies that you know not of : well do I know this. If I know it not, who should know it ?” and Rachaela threw her arms wildly about, and paced the apartment in a disordered manner.

“ It may be so : I will not dispute your superior knowledge ; only it is quite enough to provide against the evils which are apparent, without going out of the way to seek for those which are lying in obscurity. But here comes the object of our mutual solicitude ;—see that you prove your attachment to her by your composed behaviour.”

After a short interview, Ildegarda dismissed Rachaela, and related to him the scene she had just gone through, as well as the fact which had come to her knowledge respecting Volterra. Cassini listened with visible concern.

“ I fear you have not taken the wisest or surer way to attain your ends, but what you have done cannot be undone ; let us only endeavour to make the best of what may not be recalled. My noble Marchesa, if all the world were as sincere and guileless as yourself, you would be safe ; but it is not so, and there is a word called prudence, which you are too much a stranger to

the very meaning of, to guide yourself with safety through the dangers of life."

"Never reproach me with want of prudence again, when I tell you that I did not even allude to Volterra in my conference with Gamba Corta, but left it entirely to Montescudajo to plead that cause."

"A hopeless one indeed," said Cassini, mournfully; then smiling through the expression of his concern, he added, "but that is not sufficient, Signora; what think you of the scorn you have manifested in this interview? do you suppose that it will be misunderstood or forgotten? no, no; I fear you will live to repent this rashness." The Marchesa replied, "Every idea of self, or even of prudence, is, I confess, disregarded by me, when I think of the dishonourable deed of buying a nation as one might buy macaroni. Volterra is sold—sold to Pisa. These words convey indelible disgrace, and pronounce the irremediable downfall of Pisa's greatness;

the air is become polluted ; it chokes me to breathe it ; and were it not for Rachaela, I would not remain another day within the city walls."

Ranieri Lanfreducci now entered the apartment with unusual haste, and evidently agitated by contending interests.

" I go to Volterra, and I do so by my mother's sanction ; she has a noble soul, and one alive to martial glory : what *can* be done I will do to assist this oppressed people. The Lanfreducci has given me but one caution—not to take up arms personally against the government till the last extremity : but of this I must stand sole judge ; all I have determined upon is to leave nothing undone in so honourable, so just a cause ; and that I may be successful is my ardent wish, but alas ! I fear we are too late."

" Too late ! too late !" re-echoed Cassini, lifting his hands on high, as was his wont when excited by intense interest. " My good young

friend, it will not do; your efforts are unavailing : look to yourselves ; for that intemperance which may be of no avail to the persecuted Volterrans, may prove of incalculable injury to yourselves. Go not, good Signor, go not from Pisa ; be advised—stir not from hence.”

“Nay, my revered and loved friend,” rejoined Ildegarda, with great emotion, “say not so; what personal perils are to be regarded when honour is to be attained? and what happiness can be ensured by forfeiting self-approbation?”

“Most true, Signora; but there is a word, which, though of cold and repelling sound, is not necessarily the offspring of apathy, or the concomitant of age; it is only the guiding rudder to steer the vessel in its course with safety.

“I repeat to you again my warning:—go not to Volterra;” and he left them to think of his advice, but not to act upon it.

When Ildegarda was left alone with Ranieri, she said,

“ I trust I do not council you to that which your own reason condemns: let me not think that if evil should accrue, I have led you into the snare.”

“ Can you doubt me, Signora? do you so mistake my feelings, as not to be certain they correspond with your own? are we yet so little acquainted? No, Ildegarda; I will cast off this insufferable thought, which palsies my very being. Cassini has suggested alarms which I trust are wholly groundless. Can the heart that aspires to be loved by you hesitate one moment? I leave you, because I am sure that I obey your wishes in so doing, while I follow the impulse of my own; for, painful as absence may be, it would be far less painful than to remain near you with a consciousness of being unworthy so to do.”

Ildegarda smiled mournfully, as she replied,
“Only be not long away.”

“Delightful, cheering sound!—how long?—say how long!—fix a period for my absence.”

“The moon is on her wane;—when she renews her youth, renew my happiness, which, like that, will decline till you return.”

Ranieri felt these words too deeply to be able to reply to them; but his manner and his look gave her the assurance she sought; and after many a fond delaying farewell, that still prolonged the tale of love, he made one effort to conquer such weakness, and rushed from her presence. Ildegarda listened to his departing footstep till its last sound died away, and then sank back and wept.

“What, gone again!” cried Radegonda entering the apartment, her ample garment floating behind her, and rustling on the floor with more than its usual sound of consequential tumult.
“My dear Signora, you are wrong. Never

tempt fortune; the good that you possess is always greater than an uncertain addition of happiness: if you scatter your treasures on the highway, how can you expect they will not be stolen from you?" Ildegarda thought Rade-gonda alluded to Buonajuto's embassy to Volterra, and was provoked that she should have been made acquainted with it.

"You know not, Rade-gonda, of what you are talking," said Ildegarda.

"Ah! woe is me; I know better of what I am talking than thou dost of what thou art thinking. Look to it, sweetheart: there are changes abroad, and, when that is the case, who can say what may happen?—the great to-day may be the low to-morrow."

"Peace, I pray thee, good nurse,—my spirits are sufficiently agitated; increase not my sufferings!"

"I increase them! bless thee, my sweet nursling, Rade-gonda would gladly lie on a

pillow of stone, if thy pillow could be softer thereby; but I warn thee not to let Ranieri leave Pisa."

Maestrillo put his head in at the door, looked round anxiously.

"What seekest thou?"

"Truly, I seek Messer Ranieri."

"He is not here—he is gone," replied Signora: "what wantest thou of him?"

"Gone!" rejoined Maestrillo; "why I am as sure as a blind man wants his staff, some urchin chucks it out of the way."

"Speak plain for once in thy life, Maestrillo, lay aside thy foolery and thy riddles, and tell me what thou wantest, and wherefore seekest Ranieri?"

"I wanted to tell Lanfreducci, that if I had not a mind to claim relationship with him, he will stay where he is. Signora, I am not a riddler, and I speak no riddle, when I tell thee that if Ranieri leaves Pisa, thou wilt not long regret being behind him."

“Be silent, and keep thy station; depart, and trouble me no more.”

Maestrillo bowed with a mixed expression of affected humility and real concern; and when Ildegarda was alone, the manner and words of these her faithful servants failed not to make an impression, which added to the melancholy presentiment that already existed in her own breast.

To attend to all the sickly suggestions of a disturbed mind, would be to render existence and its unavoidable cares one scene of feverish anxiety; yet, wholly to disdain the prophetic gloom which, at certain epochs of every person's life, has overshadowed their path, is to disregard the warning voice which bids them prepare for the coming storm. Who is there that has journeyed any way in their earthly pilgrimage, who has not lingered on a threshold with doubtful, delaying footsteps? or gazed at a departing friend, uncertain whether they should

not forego all imagined advantages, or proposed schemes for the future, in order to secure the actual blessing of their presence? Who is there who has not owned, in greater or less degree, some touch of this indescribable working of the spirit, given, it may be, to assure us of that link between our earthly and spiritual being, which, rightly reflected upon, may produce such beneficial results? Ildegarda most assuredly was not insensible to such suggestions, and with oft-advancing, oft-retreating step did she approach the door, to give orders to recal the Lanfreducci: that she did not do so, was the decision of her reason over her will; but there may be cases where unassisted reason proves fallacious, and where too great a reliance upon our judgment proves our bane.

While matters were in this state in the Palazzo Gherardesca, the Conte di Montescudajo, in the meanwhile, was not inactive in carrying on his plans. He told the Anziani it

was with infinite regret he informed them that owing to the machinations of the Marchesa Gherardesca, and her secret spies, they might very probably lose Volterra, just as it was on the eve of being their own. "It is evident," he said, "to what her ambitious views tend; she means to bring in the Bergolini faction, and to be herself at the head of the republic. Ranieri Lanfreducci is the creature of her will, and it is not difficult to foresee, that as soon as she can overcome his boyish fear of his mother, she will have him completely in her toils: depend upon it, your power is in a tottering condition so long as the Gherardesca is suffered to be at large." The little magistrate opened his closed eyes wider than their heavy sensual lids seemed to render possible, and with a cracked tremulous voice, in which fear and rage were mingled, exclaimed—

"To the castle with her till we call a council to know what must be done."

“Not so either,” rejoined Pafetta eagerly, alarmed in his turn for the consequence of any open measures of violence. “There are not wanting those, my worthy kinsman, who would promptly rise in her favour; and at this moment, when the most trusty of our troops are dispersed, it is not by any means wise to push matters to an extremity: do not act precipitately in this business, I implore you. I propose to take infinitely more secure steps than those you hinted at, in order to put a salutary check upon the mischief. I thought it my duty, worthy cousin, to give you this information, in order that trusty and watchful eyes may be placed over this dangerous, ambitious woman; but if you leave this commission in my hands, and confide entirely to me, she shall not escape my vigilance, neither shall the other party have any apology to espouse her cause.”

“Wisely, and cautiously said,” replied Gamba Corta: “thou art the right arm of govern-

ment, we will abide in all direction of this affair as seemeth best to thee: and here, take my signet, which gives you unreserved power to employ whatever means you may deem best. Yet stay,—one word more ere you depart. What is the idle story of this murdered boy, concerning whom the Gherardesca came flaming with rage the other day?” and he detailed to Montescudajo the conference he had had with Ildegarda, concerning Buonajuto.

“What means this story?—who is this boy? That she should care whether a dirty urchin and his old beldame or a mother are murdered or not, has more matter in it than the simple fact, depend upon that. I remember to have seen a strange naked creature tumbling about in the street, whom the mob called Scaramuccio, or, Scappavia, or Intingolo. He frequently rolled before my horse like a living ball, troublesome, impudent varlet that he was; and terrified the animal to such a degree,

that my life was endangered by his buffoonery. Once I was going to have condemned him to the galleys for this very misdemeanour; but a number of old women came screaming, and prayed, for the love of St. Ranieri, that I would not hurt Buonajuto; he who had saved this one's child from being drowned, and another from being burnt, and a third from starving; with divers wonderful tales which I had not time to attend to: though from motives of policy, I thought it best to show clemency, and therefore pardoned the mischievous urchin. Yet, between ourselves, it is just as well that he should be put out of the way, provided that we incur not the odium of his death; for you are perfectly aware that all these sort of people who make a name to themselves of benefactors and supporters of the vulgar and their rights, together with similar nonsense, are generally mischievous, always dangerous, and ought to be got rid of as quickly, though as quietly, as possible."

“Doubtless,” rejoined Pafetta, “whenever their stories come to be examined into, they are always found to be rogues, and to be the tools of others, who avoid incurring danger themselves, by employing such convenient objects to carry on their views. In the present instance, it is not worth your while, certainly, to inquire into this business; but, in case any schemes should be formed detrimental to your interests, leave me to examine the affair, and I will set it at rest. You know, my good cousin, that dissatisfied spirits, under a pretence of philanthropy and justice, and all the popular sounding virtues under which they shelter their disaffection to wholesome restraints, may make to themselves an interest with the lower orders, which ought not to be permitted; and it is evident to me, in this outcry of the Gherardesca’s, that there is some concealed motive;—it may be a wish to render the present magistracy unpopular, and she her-

self is probably the contriver of the disappearance of this boy."

"It is more than likely, most trusty and well beloved cousin; but, be it as it may, I consign the entire management of this affair to your guidance: do as seems best to you;—you possess the means to act; money and arms are at your disposal: our cause is yours."

When Montescudajo left Gamba Corta, he went directly to La Torre, where he made all the minute inquiries his suspicions suggested. The tale that Pica Serassi repeated to him (in substance the same as she had before related to Ildegarda) was sufficiently exciting to his interests and his views, to stimulate him not to leave any means neglected, which might place the persons of Scaramuccio and Marinella within the grasp of his power. The better to answer his purpose he affected a kind regard for the character of one who had shown (as he said) so much benevolence and good-will towards the

poor; and he commanded, in the name of the magistrates, that all the inhabitants of that part of the country should give him intelligence the instant they had any tidings of Scaramuccio or his mother; and even promised a reward to the first person, male or female, who should bring him the news he sought. In the meantime, conducted by Pica, he examined every part of the building of La Torre, but made no discovery whatever that could tend to the elucidation of this affair, and was about to leave the place, when Jacopo Serassi came towards him, saying, "Eccellenza, you have not visited the cellar under ground, where Marinella kept all her most choice wines."

A low door not to be distinguished from the wall of which it formed a part, except by those well acquainted with the contrivance, was now with great difficulty broke open, and Jacopo led the way down some stone steps, bearing a torch to light them in their

researches. The cellar was of vast extent, and well stocked with innumerable casks of wine, but nothing was discovered which related to the persons of those whom they sought. Looking round him, however, with an air of great importance, Montescudajo said—

“It is highly improper that the effects of these good people should remain thus open at the mercy of any one who may choose to rob them of their property: in the name of government, therefore, I shall place a guard over this territory; and till Marinella comes in person to claim it, I shall take care that no one infringes upon her possessions; in the interim I will send for a few *fogliettas* of wine, which I will pay her for when she returns. You, my good lad, seem to know exactly what wines are of the best quality which are deposited here; tell us which of them you recommend.”

Jacopo, delighted to show off his knowledge, and who dearly loved the very names

of that beverage which had so often rejoiced his heart, burst forth with all his eloquence. "Here, Signor, on this side stands the divine *occhio di Pernici*, of a very old vintage, and of a flavour," kissing his fingers as he pressed them to his lips, "that Bacchus himself might envy Ariadne:—often and often have I quaffed a flask of it."

"*Ahi!*" groaned Pica, "and the more shame for you."

"Then there is the *chianti*, that nectar of the Gods; and the *Monte Pulciano*, that inspires the dullest soul with delight; and the *vino di cerisi*, that lifts a man up to the skies."

"*Ahi!*" again murmured Pica, "and casts him grovelling in the mire."

"And the *aleatico dolce*, which makes one so deliciously dry; and the *aleatico secco*, that prevents one from knowing whether one is dry or not; and the *vino di nizza*, that tingles in the veins; and the——"

“Enough, enough; I cannot do better, methinks,” interrupted Montescudajo, “than entrust you with the commission which wine to choose. And now, my good friends, remember, whoever first brings me tidings of Marinella and Scappavia, shall have a noble reward.”

Many professed their sincere and eager desire to be enabled to obtain this bounty quickly; and Montescudajo took leave of the peasants with promises of good-will and of protection.

Some days of the most anxious suspense were passed by Ildegarda, but no event occurred to shorten their apparent interminable length, till Messer Cino and Zanobi requested to be admitted to her presence.

“We are come,” they said, “Illustrissima, as it is our bounden duty to do, to ask what commands you may have; for the stars have decreed that we go to Assisi, where we are sent for by the Franciscans to assist in embellishing their noble Chiesa di St. Gregorio. Zanobi accom-

panies me, as he is to be employed in writing a life of Saint Francis. We depart, at early dawn, to-morrow, for Assisi, and have our passes signed to enable us to reach that state in safety. We are promised a munificent reward for our labours; but whether we receive much gold or not, it is a noble undertaking we are commanded to aspire to; and one worthy of the true spirit of the Muses, to be destined to work in that heavenly site, and to commemorate, by the power of our respective arts, the life of the great Saint Francis."

"Ah!" said Ildegarda, "that man lived too soon: had he been the contemporary of a future age, he would have been truly great; but as it is."

"Well, well, Signora, I meddle not with matters beyond my ken: there is a wide field for the imagination to display its powers in the mode and at the time in which we are called to act; and it is our duty to make use of these

with all the ability of which we are capable. Have you any commands, Illustrissima, which we can execute?"

"At present none, good Cino; only do not forget your friend Ildegarda, though wealth and fame await you."

"Forget thee! my great and amiable patroness, never!" and he sank on one knee as he kissed her garment. "Thou wert the first who awoke within me the latent germ of mine art; thou fosteredst that genius with thy munificent bounty, above all, with the generous and exalting kindness which did not depress the spirit it obliged; and I owe thee homage, not only of my heart's best feelings, but of the inspiration that has lit me on my path to fame." The Gherardesca was moved even to tears; Cino was not often profuse of honied words, and the serious manner in which he made this profession of affectionate allegiance came with peculiar weight to convince her of its sincerity.

“Cino has spoken my feelings,” said Zanobi, whose faltering accents alone prevented his uttering them for himself.

Ildegarda unhooked a purse which hung at her girdle, saying, “And now, my good friends, with whom I have passed so many rational, ennobling, and delightful hours, farewell! May Heaven speed you on your way, and send a blessing with this parting gift.”

They looked the sentiment with which they were imbued, and were about to leave the apartment, when Cino, with an expression of alarm, but as determined to pour forth what his mind laboured with, returned, and catching hold of her garment, “Signora Eccellenza, lend me your patient attention one moment; do not disregard the last words of a devoted servant:—there are alarming signs visible in the heavenly bodies—the stars threaten your house with a portentous gloom; look warily around you; above all, receive no one’s counsel rashly.”

Ildegarda, smiling through tears, replied
“Not even yours, Cino?”

“Ah! Signora, you may lament, when too late, if you disdain this warning. Despise nothing till thou hast thoroughly examined into and found it to be despicable; but do not, on other men’s words, condemn any thing, much less a science, which it requires years to comprehend. The knowledge of the stars is no vain thing:—canst thou bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades?—think of the Chaldeans; think of the altitude of a science which dwells in the Heavens: respect in silence what thou dost not comprehend:—be not wise in thine own conceit, disregarding the lessons of creation. Illustrissima, hear me;—Saturn, and Mars, and Jove, all square the sun; also the ascendant of thy house is on the cusp of the seventh house, opposed by ♂ in ♌: this is an awful coincidence. Most honoured lady, disregard not the words of thy humble friend Cino; above all, disregard not

the stars: if thou dost, this fatal aspect alone accounts for thy so doing. May all favouring influences give efficacy to my words! Farewell."

Ildegarda had not recovered from the sentiments of depression which the departure of persons, whom long habit and similarity of tastes had rendered necessary to her daily comforts, when Fredolfo came in, bringing a small packet.

"I come on a message, Illustrissima, which will, I think, give you pleasure; and therefore I am doubly pleased to be the bearer, since it brings me to your presence, and conveys what I think will be agreeable to you." Having thus spoken, he placed a letter in her hands.

As she took the parchment from its large silken envelope, she blushed on recognizing the seal of Ermenegilda; and having run her eye over the contents, she said—

"You know then, Fredolfo, that Ermenegilda invites Rachaela to pass some time with her

at her villa, and claims the promise I made her to this effect when she resided in my palace. To be asked a favour by the Lanfreducci is, in truth, a condescension, and one I ought to appreciate," said Ildegarda, haughtily.

"Illustrissima, I acknowledge," rejoined Fredolfo, "that you cannot consider this as any favour done to yourself; but yet, as it is a proof that the Lanfreducci begins to appreciate you as you deserve, her request, viewed in that light, is not altogether to be despised: noble minds do not ask favours of those they contemn; and, if you grant her request, who can say but that this suavity of courtesy on your part, together with Rachaela's gentle influence,—an influence which will be the more powerful, because it flows unbidden, in your favour: who can say, dear Signora, what a result may ultimately ensue?"

Ildegarda listened tranquilly, and with consi-

derable pleasure to these words ; she entertained the subject in her own breast in silence, while a bright ray of hope gradually stole over her, and cheered her very soul. None but those who have been falsely vilified, scorned, and depressed, can perhaps estimate the full delight of being recognized in their true colours ; the most refined and delicately sensitive minds are those least able to repel the shafts of malice, or the insidious poison of envenomed prejudice. There is a generous scorn arises in a noble breast when they are conscious of being injured, which makes them too often conceive it to be beneath the dignity of their nature to demand reparation, or stoop to explain their wrongs. These are the souls which never can be remunerated by this world's requital, but they have joys to which those who undervalue or injure them, can never attain. Still, while in this world, we cannot, neither ought we, to be indifferent to censure or applause ; and when

unjust calumny is even tacitly wiped away, the sunny day of retribution which succeeds the gloomy night of dark and false surmise, is such a heart-cheerer, that those alone who, like Ildegarda, have experienced the invigorating contrast, can know its value.

"You advise me, then, to grant the Lanfreducci's request," said Ildegarda, addressing Fredolfo.

"Most assuredly I do."

"Well, be it so, if Rachaela herself chooses to accept the invitation. I am happy to say her spirits are more composed, and I certainly think that change of scene will be beneficial to her. Radegonda shall attend her, and then my mind will be relieved from the anxiety I should otherwise labour under, of her not being properly watched and waited upon."

"I am myself going," said Fredolfo, "on a mission from our convent to that part of the country; and I engage, on my part, to attend particularly to her spiritual concerns."

Rachaella was now consulted, and the idea of visiting the Lanfreducci seemed to inspire her with new life. Is it that the young naturally love change—that it is the vice of their age—that variety of scene seems as necessary to them as the renewal of fresh mould to a plant? or is it that human nature, at all ages, seeks for something beyond what this world and its present enjoyments can ever give? What is this restless love of change, which all experience?—what, but the inadequacy of this world's best gifts to constitute the soul's felicity? Is it not a lesson deeply to be conned over?

When Ildegarda saw Rachaella and Rade-gonda depart, there was a tumultuous wildness of feeling in her breast:—that she should have it a second time in her power to oblige Ermenegilda,—that the latter should have deigned to sue for this obligation,—that her own faithful damsel should be placed at the ear of the Lanfreducci, to speak of her, as she knew that dear one would do; all these were indeed consider-

ations which gratified her beyond her most sanguine hopes : but then what a price did she not pay to obtain this gratification ! She felt alone in the wide world ; a short time had deprived her of all those most dear to her heart, of all most consonant to her tastes and to her habits of life ; and, as she walked through the great hall of her palace, and trod its ample staircase, she paused with a feeling of nameless awe, to hear the sound of her own footsteps reverberating in its vaulted roof, and owned a sense of complete loneliness, which struck with a chill like that of death through her veins. Ashamed to avow such weakness even to herself, she sought the open corridor that led from her chamber to the garden, and there she looked up to the starry Heavens, scintillating with lucid fires ; but as the brilliant host glittered before her eyes, instead of delighting, as she usually did, in their visible glory, she thought of Cino's warning, and trembled in-

wardly: her boasted reason had no power to give her comfort; and thrown back upon her own reflections, she acknowledged, with humbled heart, the efficacy of that Power alone, which can give strength and comfort under every dispensation.

CHAPTER VII.

TREACHERY.

Regitur fatis mortale genus,
Nec sibi quispiam spondere potest
Firmum et stabile: perque casus
Volvitur varios semper nobis
Metuenda dies.

Senec. Œd. Act 5, chor.

MONTESCUDAJO's first care, after his visit to La Torre, was to send for some of the casks of wine: one of these he ordered Pranzetti to broach directly, and bring him a goblet of its contents. He was preparing to luxuriate in a draught of *occhio di Pernice*, when his servant came in laughing, with his hands full of papers, which he threw down upon the floor.

“What is the meaning of this?” ejaculated

the enraged Pafetta; "did I not order thee to bring me some wine? what foolery will the fellow practise next?"

"Very true, Signor Maestro, you commanded me to bring you wine, but the barrel only contained these writings: they were rolled in skins of foreign leather, doubtless to preserve them: for my part, I think, had they been destroyed long ago it would have been of no consequence. Why here is a sufficient quantity of parchment upon which to write all the law deeds of Pisa, and Florence into the bargain."

Montescudajo turned them over angrily; and, giving free course to his passion, called his servant by every opprobrious name which his ungoverned temper could devise, or which the Italian language, so curious in epithets of the kind, could produce, and then began to tear and scatter about the objects of his disappointment, till, in another moment, his usual caution and foresight of possible contingencies returned, and he

ordered Pranzetti to gather up the fragments, and keep them carefully ; “for they may,” he said, “be of consequence to the state.” In consideration of this possibility, he sent to the various learned bodies in Pisa, to decypher the manuscripts, but no one could be found competent to perform the task.

“Signor Maestro,” said Pranzetti, “I am acquainted with a person who knows more than all the learned men of Italy put together. He, I am sure, would read you these strange characters as easily as I can fill you a flask of Florence ; but I am not at liberty to tell you his name, indeed I don’t know it myself. Only trust to me, and if this extraordinary person or his mother are to be found, I have no doubt but your curiosity will be satisfied. Believe me, Signor, *questi non son cose dozinale*, and my word is worth attending to,—you have been told that before—you may remember *when*.”

Pafetta’s flesh crept on his bones at this recol-

lection; for he had a vivid remembrance of a certain night, when particular deeds of his had been declared to him by means which he believed were supernatural. In a moment after his brutal behaviour and gross words, upon this suggestion, he meanly condescended to treat his servant with the utmost familiarity.

Pranzetti in the interim gathered up the manuscripts, and deposited them safely among his private stores, determined to turn them to his own account if an opportunity occurred.

Montescudajo, disappointed in this business, as well as in his researches after Buonajuto, had yet other engines at work concerning which he was not less interested. A letter was now brought to him, which he had caused to be intercepted, and which proved to be from Ranieri; he hastily broke open the packet, and read as follows:—

“*Alla care bianche mani.*—Envied messenger, bear all my tenderest homage to the lady

of my doom.—The disgraceful deed is done. Our intelligence came too late to save Volterra. But various circumstances have arisen out of my attempt to obey you, which I hasten to communicate:—I lost no time in reaching this place; the sun began to break as the high rock on which this city stands, like a circling diadem on its brow, first appeared to my view. The mists of the night still shrouded its rocky base; and the head of the mountain was seen, as it were apart, suspended in mid Heaven, a bright beam illuminating it with a glory.—Ah! thought I, would that its moral glory were placed as far above the reach of mortal ill! Scarcely had I time to make the reflection, when the glitter of arms, like wreathes of dazzling brightness, wound in spiral columns through the air, and attracted all my attention; a fresh wind arose, when immediately the vapour rolled off, and to my astonishment I recognized the Florentine troops ascending the mountain.

Trusting to the security of my disguise, I mingled with some of the loiterers in their rear ; and upon inquiry, I found that the disgraceful bargain between the Pisans and Belfredotte was known in full time by the Florentines to enable them to step in and appropriate to themselves that territory which they had so long coveted. Under pretence of the Volterrans being unable to defend themselves, they took possession of it at once, by sending a large body of troops, as they first pretended, to their aid, but in fact to make themselves its master. The better to obtain their purpose at little cost of blood or treasure, they promised to confirm the Volterrans in all their rights and immunities, merely on condition, as they declared, of annexing their state to that of Florence: 'but,' added my informer, 'we shall lay on the yoke as heavily as we may see fit, when once it is safely fixed upon them.' I heard this intelligence, with what feelings of indignation I leave you to imagine ; but situated

as I was, I dared not to betray them, as I should have been quickly silenced: I affected, therefore, while I revolted at the pretence, to be a countryman, who wished to enlist as a soldier in their service; 'but,' said I, 'I am come to look about me a little first, and see whether I would exchange my pruning-hook for a spear or not. Thus I passed on unnoticed, and the more easily, as there were many peasants accompanying their mules, laden with the produce of their gardens, for which they found a ready sale with the thirsty soldiers.

"When the troops reached the city, an unexpected circumstance occurred. The gates were shut and the Cyclopean walls had been rendered impregnable; the citizens having repaired such parts as time had decayed, in a most effective manner;—and a shower of arrows greeted the Florentines with a very different reception from that which they had been led to expect. In vain their heralds sounded for a parley, in vain they

held up the banners of peace ; many a brave heart was pierced without striking a blow ; till, at length, the soldiers could endure it no longer, and their leader, Bonifazio Lupo, commanded them to storm the place. The entrance of the gate was long and well-disputed ; and prodigies of valour were performed by a young soldier, who was seen at one time defending that part where a breach was effected in the modern reparations of the otherwise impregnable Etruscan walls,—now flying to the gate from whence some of his party had been driven back, and rallying them again to its defence. What enraged the assailants the more was, that these brave troops were fighting without any regular arms or equipment ; that they were youths apparently unequal to the war they waged, and seemed rather inspired by supernatural aids, than by any human strength or power. With infinite difficulty I had made my way near enough to distinguish the leader of these brave

spirits, and a more gallant bearing in more youthful form never was beheld. At length, when the pass of the gate was forced by numbers, and that the men literally rushed on over the dead and dying bodies of their companions, I still saw him braving and defying the multitudes who were surrounding him on all sides. As he would not yield, they were about to cut him down, when I interposed, and, by means of a heavy purse, had the happiness of saving this brave being's life ; but in so doing, I risked a discovery of my rank and situation, which, had not the avaricious passions of these men superseded all other thoughts, must inevitably have been the case. The young soldier whom I had rescued, scarcely thanked me, for I had, he said, ' saved a valueless existence. ' In the first instance of my life where I have attempted to be of any mark or use, I have wholly failed, and shall now return to my own insignificance. Did not something of better

hope yet glow within my breast, I would seek the death from which you have so generously redeemed me: but it may be, that I am reserved for brighter and better days.'—'It is our duty ever to believe this,' I said, 'and to act upon the belief.'

"All resistance seemed to have ceased on the part of the Volterrans against the Pisans, with the defeat of this young soldier: but no sooner had they taken possession of the town, than it was made known that Belfredotte had paid the price of his contemptible conduct by his life; for a party of the Volterrans having discovered his perfidy, burst into the castle and pierced him with a thousand wounds, saying, that such a death was too merciful for so vile a wretch.

"As there was at this juncture nothing more to be done; and as I might have found myself in an unpleasant predicament had I been recognized, I took advantage of the confusion which prevailed, to depart as speedily as pos-

sible, and proposed to my young hero to
my fortunes. He agreed to accompany
a time, but said that his life was devoted to
purpose, that he was bound by a vow to
low; and, even though I had saved that I
could not engage to remain with me at
certain time, or indeed for any fixed period
ever: 'nevertheless,' he added, 'I owe you
price of life, and I can repay you the debt
a confidence I would make to one who is
pable of esteeming such a trust as thou
were a thing of value to the receiver as to
giver.' This conversation passed as we
descending the hill into the Valle di Cecina.

"Scarcely had the latter word been pronounced
by my companion, when a party of Pisan
suddenly turned a corner of the road,
stopped us to ask whence we came, where
were, and what was the news from Volterra.
related to them the issue of the disgraceful
business in a few words; and Anton

Baschi, their leader, having been an unwilling instrument in this business, declared it was a relief to him to have been spared the painful duty of such an inglorious service; 'at the same time,' he added, 'my sword is rusting in its scabbard, and I should like to lose the bad relish of this debasing mission, where there is a fair field, open for gallant honest fighting, some prize to warm the heart of a soldier who thirsts for fame.'

" ' Well said,' cried my young companion; 'and, but that the subject admits not of delay, I should not dare to say thus much;—pardon the boldness of my speech. Be it known to you, gallant knight, that the castle of Pietra Buona is at this moment besieged by Giovanni del Sasso, the leader of a party of *condottieri*, composed of different nations, who are now in the pay of the Florentines. Let not these *astuti*, these low intriguers, the Florentines, trick us out of our lawful possessions

and adherents ;—turn your arms directly to the relief of Pietra Buona, and you, who came to gather disgraceful laurels, shall return to your homes covered with fresh, unsullied fame, or, what is still better, the consciousness of its desert.’

“ ‘If your news be true, young stranger, your advice is not to be disregarded: what say you, Ranieri?’ and he took me aside; ‘shall we venture without due instructions to achieve an action which, even if it prove successful, will most probably obtain censure, and, it may be, punishment?’

“ We conversed together for some time, without coming to any decision, and rejoined our young adventurer. ‘Do you hesitate?’ said he; ‘is the spirit of the Pisans so sunk by slavery, that they dare not do a deed will shame their tyrant magistrates, those worthless carrion, that seek only for a carcass to glut their appetite of avarice? Pay them for it—pay them for it—pay them for doing well to your

country, and they will be satisfied ; or pay them for ruining or disgracing it—it is all one to them, so that they hug the gold.’

“ ‘ Who is this bold youth ? ’ said De Baschi, turning to me : ‘ he trusts much to our discretion, or we might soon make him lose that tongue which wags so glibly. But, i’faith, I like his freedom ; I have not heard such sounds this many a day,—they ring an alarum to my spirits ; for it is the freedom of a noble heart that speaks, and will not be silenced ; it is not the raw impertinence of presumptuous youth which inspires his words : but, again I ask, who is he ? ’

“ ‘ That is more than I know myself,’ I replied ; ‘ but this I know, that he is brave, and I cannot believe aught to his disadvantage.’

“ Baschi addressed himself somewhat abruptly to the young soldier :

“ ‘ Tell me, my young Signor, what authority have you for the news you have detailed to me ? and who are you, that, on your simple

assertion, I am to believe a tale, which may be raised in wanton jest, or for evil purpose.'

" 'Pardon me, Signor, in your turn, if I reply that I stand not here to be questioned thus uncourteously by any man; I express my wishes, and offer you my aid, such as it is, to prosecute the plan I have proposed for your consideration; if it suits you not, go your way, and suffer me to go mine. Who I am, I do not myself know; and if I did, I would not tell you, perhaps.—Are you answered?'

" 'Softly, my young firebrand; remember, that in these times we do not stand upon ceremonies, and those who may not choose to introduce themselves civilly into our notice, we take the liberty of introducing to ourselves. Seize that young gallant,' speaking to some of his men: 'we must be better acquainted ere we part.'

" 'Pardon me, De Baschi,' I cried, 'this young man is of noble spirit, and I will answer for him, at my own peril; but he will not brook such degrading treatment, neither will I brook

it for him. Trust me, the question is not whether we shall doubt the young soldier's word, but whether or not we shall act upon it?"

" 'My blood boils for revenge,' was his reply, 'on these Florentines; and if you will grant me but the opportunity of endeavouring to obtain it, I am ready to take the hazard of all blame, only I do not choose to be sent on a fool's errand.'

" 'I will be surety for the truth of this stranger,' was my reply. 'Let us to Pietra Buona; and here I pluck a branch of this ilex, in token that we shall have a right to return home crowned with honourable victory.'

"It chanced that some of the men who composed his troop had been resident at Pietra Buona; many of them had wives and families of that country: so that when they heard the fortress was taken from them by the Florentines, to recover it became an interest in which their hearts, as well as their bravery, was concerned. They waved

their casques in the air, and shouted 'For Pietra Buona!' The union of spirit which prevailed soon decided their hesitating leader, and, after a short conversation with me, the question was settled, and we marched for Pietra Buona.

"Peace between my young friend and De Baschi was easily adjusted; their natures were too similar not to make them admire each other; and the former, with a manner in which the humility of a younger person should ever address an elder, demanded his forgiveness, saying, 'If my warmth overpassed the bounds of respect, I pray you remember how hard it is to suffer contumely or distrust for suspicions which we know ourselves to be incapable of deserving.'

" 'Thou art a gallant youth, whoever thou art: thine hand in token of friendship,—and do you, Ranieri, witness the engagement.'

"Shortly after this scene I claimed from the stranger the confidence he had voluntarily offered me; and while the soldiers halted to re-

pose on their march, we stepped aside from the troop, when, raising his vizor, he fixed his eyes on mine : ‘ Do you not recognize Edoardo ? ’ he said ; and immediately the beautiful boy whom I had seen, Marchesa, at your palace, stood before me.

“ ‘ And are you the soldier,’ I cried, ‘ who first discovered the Pisan treachery to me ? Are you the strange, wild, uncouth creature whom I have seen flying about the streets, in company with all the young beggars of the place ;—can it be possible ? ’

“ ‘ It is possible,’ he replied ; ‘ thus I have been seen, and thus you may again behold me : all I have to request is, that, although mingling with such refuse, you would not account me one of their crew, but an unhappy being, compelled from circumstances to stoop to such degradation, and hoping thereby to become, at last, not only reinstated in my due place in society, but with the additional acquirement of those distinctions which must ever be self-

achieved, and which can alone render hereditary greatness truly honorable or truly honoured.’

“ ‘ You cannot be unconscious,’ I replied, ‘ of the interest you excite: yet ere you proceed farther, I must make one condition before I can receive your confidence; allow me to impart it to the Marchesa Gherardesca:—from her I can have no secret; without her approval I can enter into no plan, nor bind myself to any promise.’

“ ‘ Impossible!’ he said; ‘ I may not—dare not; if you but knew what tie restrains me.’

“ ‘ Well, I will only relate to you one scene which took place in my presence, and after that, if you do not conceive that your history is as safe in her keeping as in my own, I will not press you farther, but be content to trust to you, remaining ignorant of what you deem it necessary to conceal from me;’ and here I related the adventure at the Serchio, the lively interest you, Signora, had taken in it, and the fatal effect it had had on Rachaella.

“ As I spoke he became more and more

agitated, until bursting into passionate declamation, he exclaimed ‘Wretch that I am, to have occasioned so much concern! yet in the midst of this regret there is a selfish joy in knowing that one human heart cares for me:—dear, dear Rachaela! from infancy our affections were knit together: now that she lives in splendour, caressed and admired, I thought she might, in all likelihood, forget me;—I thank Heaven she has not.’ He tried to steady the tremulous accent, to brush away the gushing tear by the quick motion of its fringed lid: he could not master these feelings, and I turned away infected also by their contagion. Quickly recovering, he went on to say, ‘I am only a boy yet; but if Heaven blesses my vows they shall see—I think I am not—I hope I am not—’

“ ‘What are you not?’ I warmly rejoined.

“ ‘Not wholly worthless of the manifestation of such interest.’

“ ‘No, my life you are not,’ I cried,

grasping his hand ;—‘but will you allow me to quiet the alarm of Rachaela, and restore her to health ; to relieve the anxiety of the Marchesa, and to tell them that Scaramuccio, Scappavia, and Edoardo, and the young hero, are one ?’

“ ‘Mock me not, I conjure you, by sounds of things, that when they are real are glorious, but used thus, how bitter to be borne ; they dye my brow with shame.—No !’ he continued, speaking rapidly,—‘tell them Edoardo is alive ; that he knew by accident of the sale of Volterra ; that, from early habit and early associations, he loved the Etruscan city, and endeavoured to snatch it from its inglorious fate ; that, having failed, totally failed, Edoardo must seek elsewhere some honourable token of renown ;—but more than this, of my own situation, I dare not divulge. Above all, it would be highly injurious to inform Rachaela, for her irritable nerves and vivid imagination could not endure the pressure which rests upon my heart.’

“ ‘ To Rachaela, perhaps not,’ I said ; ‘ but to the Marchesa ?’ He smiled, and tendering me his hand, replied—

“ ‘ I owe you my life :—why should I not be content still to do so ?—and your life is one with her’s,’ he added (and added, oh ! how truly !)—‘ take, then, my story to your keeping ; and when you have heard it, judge whether or not I have reason to be cautious. My first recollection is of the Solfa Terra, in the Valle di Cecina :—my infancy was spent in crawling over those sulphureous regions, in being accustomed to brave their dangers, in climbing up the neighbouring rocks to bring back stray herds : as I grew to childhood, I used to contrive some pleasures for my sister,—such as weaving baskets for her, or catching fish to procure her a delicacy for her food, for she was weakly, and could seldom taste of the fare Marinella procured for us. Our first adventure you are acquainted with, which befel us in the snow storm ; and after that, notwithstanding the ter-

ror I had endured, my love of wandering became so strong, that I often disappeared for days. At such times, I would seek the most lonely of the peasants' houses, and live with them till the remembrance of Rachaela made me again return to our cave, when I received the sharpest reprimands from Marinella. One day, when I was about twelve years old, I was sitting with Marinella on the mountain, and a flock of sheep were driven by;—some of them were marked in a particular manner, and I inquired the reason. 'For the same reason that you are marked,—they are for the slaughter.' Accustomed as I had been to the sharp whistling tone of her voice, I felt as though I was pierced through and through, and from that day I never gave her a moment's rest, till she would disclose to me the full meaning of those horrid words; but strange to say, instead of feeling terrified, a certain boldness of spirit seemed to nerve my little frame, and I said to myself, 'If this is the case, I must be wary and determined, in order

to avoid my fate." Early and late I followed Marinella, demanding of her the meaning of my being marked for the slaughter.—'Thus it is,' said she, grasping me with her long iron hand. 'Look at me:—seest thou this shrivelled chalky skin—this mist-like hair—this premature old age? They are the effect of poison: I was young and rosy of hue;—but for thou and thy sister I am what I am. The Conte di Montescudajo did the deed:—but he has not silenced the tongue, and its shrill whispers shall yet pierce the marrow of his bones, as he has sapped the vital current of my blood, and blasted my existence. Like as the mildew blight falls on the fresh-springing vigorous tree, and withers it for ever, so am I blighted; but, by this very change in my person and in my being, I may yet reward his villany. Thou art the rightful heir of his estates and honours;—on thy head, and on thy sister's, rest the glories of thy house. More than this I cannot divulge; for I bound myself by a dreadful oath, so

long as one being shall walk this earth, never to disclose the rest. Remember, if by sign or word, this fact ever escapes thee,—thou and Rachaela must pay the forfeit by thy lives.' It was in vain to press her to any farther disclosure; but the knowledge that I was not the ignoble creature which our outward circumstances bespoke us to be, kindled a fire within me that nothing will ever quench, save the restoration to our rights, or death. From the moment I became acquainted with this secret, my endeavours were all directed to such pursuits as I conceived likely to give me power and strength to achieve deeds of glory. I made long absences, and mingling with the lowest of the people, I learnt from them their arts, their handycraft, and, above all, their power of personal endurance, and of every sort of privation. I have voluntarily fasted and abstained from even a draught of water till nature could go no farther. I taught myself

to climb rocks that seemed impracticable, to run with great celerity, and to practise such contortions of the limbs as produced a suppleness of joint which equals that of some of the most flexible of the animal creation. By degrees, I obtained many followers and admirers among the idle boys who flocked around to see me perform these exercises; and I gradually gathered together and trained various bands of these idlers into regular troops:—but all my endeavours would have been in vain, had not an accident put me in possession of that great master-key to all human passions—gold. I had been to Leghorn, there to learn the practical art of navigation; and had I not previously taught myself that of living in the waters, my career would have been ended at the bottom of the ocean. I went out in a small fishing felucca, with another boy, when a violent storm came on, and rendered our sail unmanageable: in vain we endeavoured to tear it down; its

weight upset the boat some distance from the shore, and by swimming alone was my life preserved, as well as that of my companion. The storm which had wrecked our little bark was fatal to many a gallant vessel, and the next day the coast was strewed with their remains. We were the first to tread that lonely shore; and while my companion was engaged in examining some distant object that was floating on the waves, fortune cast at my feet a bag of gold: its own weight had buried it in the sands, but not so deeply but that I pulled it out, and concealing it in the folds of my cloak, I carried it away to a place of safety. When I first counted over my treasure, I had great remorse at the idea of appropriating it to my own purposes; but, as time went on, and that no claim was made by any of the surviving sufferers in that awful night, I considered it as a gift sent by Providence to enable me to prosecute my schemes; and I used it sparingly, as occasion

demanded, either to satisfy the avarice of Marinella, or to secure the obedience of the various troops of youths whom I had organized with considerable success. After the Marchesa took Rachaella to live with her, Marinella said it was better that we should be near her; 'and therefore,' she said, 'we will remove to a possession of mine which is only distant three miles from Pisa.' 'A possession of yours? have you, then, any possession? Why are you always pleading poverty, and demanding money from me?' 'When I demand money from thee, it is not to waste it: whatever I possess at my death shall be yours; but we have need of all that we can collect, for gold may serve and save us when nothing else human will.' To La Torre, then, we came, and there, to my astonishment, Marinella changed herself into another creature;—she became, from the fearful white creature, a sunburnt peasant; her dress was of the richest of the country fashion, and our food was

clean and plentiful: still she laboured as though her life depended upon her exertions; and, what was more irksome to me, she kept me always in her garden or vineyard, so that the plans I formed for my advancement in various sorts of acquirement were frustrated. I now declared my intention no longer to be subject to such slavery, but I promised her gold if she would tell me the secret of her metamorphose, alleging that I had means of bringing her more gold still, provided she enabled me to assume the appearance which she had taken: accordingly, I paid her many pieces of money, and in return she gave me a small pot, containing a species of unguent, which produced the desired effect, and left me as you saw me, a sun-dyed peasant: at the same time, she told me that warm vinegar would at any moment easily efface the stain, and this I also proved. During the few years we passed at La Torre, I perfected the plan I had formed, of establishing various bodies

of persons who should be ready to act in whatever way I commanded them. I appointed certain places of rendezvous where we met at stated periods, and I ordained secret signs; so that any of those belonging to our community might recognize each other: by means of a particular number of fire rockets, we communicated to distant stations, when we wished to assemble in greater or less numbers: and, above all, I kept my own secrets and intentions even from my own adherents, only disclosing just as much of them as was necessary to be known, in order that they might be fulfilled; every head boy, or captain, was answerable for ten under his command; and the power I held, of rewarding or punishing, was so great that I have seldom had any of my orders neglected or forgotten. Then I mingled all this discipline with amusement: on certain days we held great feasts; and, after performing our various exercises,—running, wrestling, shooting arrows at

a mark, climbing trees, and leaping from one branch to another, with sundry other devices which formed the limbs to strength and activity,— I had a table spread, such as rock or mead could afford us, and I brought to it all the good things which might gratify my comrades' appetites, seldom partaking of these myself, but suffering them to carry off the remnants to their families. It was one of my spies who first brought me intelligence of the sale of Volterra: I did not credit it, until I taxed the servant of Montescudajo with the tale, and through him discovered the whole plot from its commencement. Then I flew to arms: I summoned you to the Borgo;—the rest is known to you:—yet stay, one word more. The better to avoid any suspicions which might have led to the detection of Marinella, and subsequently to my own,—for I had reason to believe that such suspicions were afloat ever since I had made my appearance at the Marchesa Gherardesca's,—I pro-

posed to her to leave La Torre, and combine such circumstances and appearances as would lead to the belief that we were murdered: for this reason I dipped my cloak in the blood of a sheep, which had been slaughtered, and laid it on the floor of the room where Marinella received the customers that came to buy her wine; and I persuaded her the more readily to enter into this scheme, because I sold the possession for more than it was worth, and brought her the money in hard cash, which so delighted her eyes, that she would have gone to Mount Caucasus, if I had desired her.'

"Here ended this extraordinary tale, which will, I feel sure, inspire you with all the interest that it has excited in me. We are now lying before Pietra Buona; but nothing, save death, or being totally disabled, shall prevent my being at your palace gate TO THE DAY.

From your faithful and devoted

LANFREDUCCI."

The effect this letter produced on Montescudajo may be imagined. His first action, in consequence of the information it contained, was to load Pranzetti with irons, and deposit him in the prison of the galley-slaves. The next, to seek the Anziani, in order to hold council as to what was to be done in respect to Pietra Buona, and the persons concerned in that affair. The issue of this agency will be shown in the course of the Narrative.

CHAPTER VIII.

DEATH.

“ In all thy designs of temporal advantages, keep thy expectations and hopes low ; clog them with suspicions, abatements and alloys. They are trimmed up with report and expectation, but in reality are like the apples of Sodom,—beautiful to the eye, but vanish into dust when touched.”

Sir Matthew Hale.

To return to the Gherardesca. The day was fast approaching which was to restore Lanfreducci to her ; and she looked forward, with a sense of anguish and anxiety which her present lonely condition rendered almost insufferable, to that moment of reunion, as to the termination of all her sorrows. She now asked

herself if the presence of a beloved object could not suffice alone to woman's happiness, without seeking for the extraneous adjuncts of fame and power, and forgot in the misery of present suffering, that, if that were removed, there could be any other. "Radegonda knew better the nature of my heart than I did myself," she said; "when she warned me not to send Ranieri away, a wiser voice spoke within her than that which I obstinately hearkened to." But Ildegarda reasoned falsely; there is no true or stable happiness, which is purchased by the sacrifice of self-approbation; and whatever she now conceived of her own feelings, they were such as would never have been long gratified, had an inglorious indulgence been the price of that gratification. It was in vain she sought in her usual occupations, to find the interest which they afforded her in former hours; and she imagined that what these denied her might be obtained, perhaps, by the invigo-

rating air of Heaven. Autumn was now far advanced ; a fresher breeze came up the Arno, and as she inhaled its pure breath, her nerves seemed to be new strung. She bent her steps to the Campo Santo : many long days had passed since she sought to muse within its holy walls ; and a thrilling sensation of awe came over her as she paced its marble cloisters. The sound of her footstep alone broke the solemn silence of the place, except when an occasional gust of wind moaned through the fretwork of the open arches. She paused opposite to the same representation of Moral Poesy where she had first been made conscious of her attachment to Ranieri—of Ranieri's devotion to her. The uplifted scythe of Death still waved over the minions of luxury and pleasure ; the clasped hands of the miserable objects who courted his stroke were still supplicating in vain. She paused in long and earnest contemplation before this imagery of life, destined by its silent eloquence

to impart the same lesson to succeeding ages; and as these thoughts filled her mind with the imperishable truths of moral virtue, she gradually felt a holy calm steal over her agitated senses, and subdue their tumult. Again she walked slowly onwards, and from the increased gloom that spread around, she apprehended a violent storm, which induced her to step into the open area that runs along the interior of the building, in order to look at the threatening tempest, and remain where she was, or return home, according as its approach was more or less nigh. The first step she made was on a grave, newly dug:—she started, and looked around: the heavy lowering clouds seemed to shroud herself, and the scene in which she was placed, with a funereal pall. The same moment, persons were heard on the outside of the entrance, calling the Custodé: the door opened, and a procession following a corpse entered the cloister. She retreated a few steps, and paused

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to witness the ceremony. The requiem for the dead was sung, and a short mass recited: then pressed forward a multitude of the poorer orders of the people, to take a last look of the deceased; they touched the body reverently, and bent over it with many tears. Ildegarda, attracted by sympathy, also approached, and, kneeling at the side of the open bier, beheld in the features of the corpse the well-known countenance of Cassini, cold as the marble on which she knelt. She clasped her hands together in mingled astonishment and woe; nor could she leave off gazing at the remains of her dear and honoured friend, until rudely forced away by some of the officiating priests.

“When did he die?” she exclaimed; “and of what malady? Why was I not informed of his being ill? was there no kind friend to summon me to his death bed? It is most cruel:—it is not to be believed that Cassini would not have

sent for me in his illness: it cannot be,—he has *not* died a natural death.”

At this assertion the priests declared that she was violating the sacredness of the sanctuary by insinuating such a profanation of the characters of the monks who had witnessed his decease, and must of course have known had her suspicions borne the least semblance of reality. But the peasantry, who were heart-felt mourners, seemed struck by Ildegarda's words, and beat their breasts, and called down vengeance on his murderers. It was with considerable difficulty that all these persons, together with the Marchesa Gherardesca, were thrust out of the Campo Santo. The gates were locked, and the whole multitude dispersed to lament in their respective homes the loss of one whom they believed had not met his death fairly, and who had been to them as a father and a friend. Ildegarda could scarcely support herself to walk home, and felt stunned by this

sudden and irreparable blow; but was roused to a fresh sense of anguish on meeting a man bearing a pole, to which was fastened a black flag, and the name of Buonajuto written in large letters upon it, under a scull and a dagger, with rude representations of demons and witches, and the words "Bring the traitor alive or dead, for a thousand golden sequins!"

"What is this?" questioned Ildegarda, while a sense of suffocation prevented her being able to utter more.

Some one answered, "Have you not heard that the well-known Buonajuto, Scappavia, Intingolo, has been guilty of treason, and that a price is set upon his head, as well as upon that of his mother, the old witch Marinella? They are both condemned to be burnt at the same stake." Ildegarda tottered—her brain whirled round: she caught hold of Maestrillo's arm, and, before he could prevent her, sank to the earth. The passers-by aided to conve

her into her palace, where her attendants quickly assembled to give her every assistance.

While these awful events were passing in Pisa, Ranieri and Buonajuto were busily engaged in taking cognizance of the site of Pietra Buona. Placed on the pointed summit of a rock which rose out of many others of lesser dimensions, its very situation was by nature a fortification, and it required but little assistance from art to render it almost impregnable. On one side only was there a chance of success to assailants: it was on that where formerly a thick wood covered a considerable extent of territory; but having been felled to supply fuel for the inhabitants, the trunks of the trees remained like so many stepping stones to facilitate a footing to the besiegers: but the besieged, aware of this, had of course collected all their strength to defend this point—not that at the moment they apprehended any attack; and they were in the greatest consternation when

they found that the possession of the fortress was to be disputed ; for they were wholly unprepared to sustain any obstinate siege.

Antonio de Baschi's first care was to draw a cordon of troops round the base of the mountain of Pietra Buona, so that they could not send for any additional assistance. But he was well aware that his best chance of success was by a *coup-de-main*, and he determined to make the attack that very night. In the interim he disposed his men with great art, so as to deceive the enemy respecting their numbers: for this purpose the ground lay very advantageously ; and by making the troops defile from behind a rising bank, and march off in another direction, returning again to the point from whence they had set out, he succeeded in impressing the enemy with the belief of being twice as strong as he really was. He feigned, as evening closed, that his little band were betaking themselves to repose: all fires

were extinguished, no noise was heard, and the extreme darkness of the night favoured his scheme. Edoardo, with his own peculiar followers, were the first appointed to act on this service: they were inured to such fatiguing enterprize, and mounted the hill like so many goats. Ranieri too, with equal ardour, followed the train of his young friend, and had actually reached the outer bastion in safety, before any of them; but unfortunately, in the heat and impetuosity of the moment, he shouted to his companions, which alarmed one of the sentinels, and immediately the word was passed round the walls, when the assailants were overpowered by multitudes. Antonio's men fought to infinite disadvantage; for they were attacked from a higher bastion, and they fell to the ground as thick as hail; till, at length, De Baschi, seeing it was in vain to rush to certain death, gave the signal for retreat, and with a

celerity as silent as it was rapid, those who had survived this unfortunate attempt glided down the hill, and were again in a place of safety.

"It was a mad scheme," said Antonio, as he unlaced his corslet; "I told Ranieri so, and I grieve that we engaged in it. Had it not been for that wild boy, we should not have been induced to seek our own disgrace."

"Nay," said Edoardo, "not disgrace either, Signor; the daylight will bear witness that we both dealt and received some gallant deaths; and though we have failed this time, we shall know better how to manage the next."

"It is one thing to fight bravely," answered De Baschi, "and another to be fool-hardy: I think my stomach has as good an appetite for the game as most men's, but I have no desire to throw away my own or others' lives wantonly. Where is Ranieri? what has he to say now for having induced me to fall into this mad scheme?"

By his saintship, he shall answer to me for having inveigled me to attempt an undertaking at which we fight at a certain loss, conquerors or conquered ; for well I know the magistrates of Pisa will give us no thanks. Ranieri, Signor, come hither !”

But Ranieri was called in vain ; he was nowhere to be found.

“ Lanfreducci was the first to set foot on the bastion,” said a soldier, coming forward : “ he gave me his hand to assist me to spring up after him ; doubtless he has been struck down, overpowered by numbers, and is either slain or has been made prisoner.”

“ A luckless chance, by all that is unfortunate,” exclaimed Antonio ; “ my friend’s life has been thus sacrificed to a silly boy’s romantic desire for glory. Fool ! madman ! that I was, to listen to this idle, ill-advised undertaking ! Edoardo, thou shalt answer for this with

the severest punishment the state can inflict ; as well as with the remorse which must wring thy heart, at having been the occasion of this wretched disaster."

Edoardo stood pale and downcast before his accuser ; but when he heard this unjust sentence pronounced, he started up with honest indignation beaming in his countenance.

" That I have been the innocent cause of this misfortune is, alas ! most true : nothing that you can say will add to the sorrow which this consciousness conveys : still I am innocent ; for the irreparable loss we have sustained in Ranieri, is the fate of war. But there is hope remaining that he may not be slain—I may yet redeem that most precious life, and I stand ready to attempt the deed, at the risk of my own. One only boon I crave. Suffer me to make good my way into the fortress alone, and if in the space of four-and-twenty hours I bring you not certain tid-

ings of Lanfreducci, take my worthless life, and, what is worse, far worse, consign my memory to disgrace and oblivion."

"Presumptuous folly ! thou lily-cheeked varlet ! Thou to enter the fortress alone ! thou to bring us news of Ranieri !—vain boaster !"

"Hear me," replied the youth calmly : "to rail at one who may not avenge the insult becomes not a brave and powerful accuser ; I receive these taunts meekly now, to cast them back in thy teeth with double-edged defiance, should it ever be my lot (as something buoyant in my spirit still tells me it will) to prove to thee hereafter that thou wrongest me. All the favour I demand is, that thou wouldst wait here with thy troop for the time I have specified :—wilt thou grant me this boon or not ?"

Edoardo could not plead in vain. He was one of those persons stamped with that seal of supremacy, which it is difficult exactly to define

or describe, but which is nevertheless obeyed by all.

“Thou provoking young devil! thou Scaramuccio, Intingolo, Scappavia! why do I not tear thee in pieces for firing my blood with rage at one moment, and softening me down to do thy will and command the next? Perhaps it may be that thou art in very deed leagued with some evil spirit; at all events, I am in thy toils till I can break the spell. Tell me once more what am I to do, young scapegrace; and for this last time I will obey thee.”

“Only one thing;—wait here till thou hearest from me.”

“And now,” said Antonio, softening his tone of voice, “go take some rest, for thou hast need of sleep, as have all these brave ones likewise; and then to thy enterprize.”

“Sleep!” rejoined Edoardo; “this is no time for such indulgence; I have taught sleep

to wait for me; I do not wait on sleep:" and turning round, he beckoned to his own little troop of youths; gave them some private orders, and was quickly out of sight.

It appeared to Antonio, that he had only just laid his head to a soldier's pillow, when he was roused by the repeated shouts of Edoardo.

"What, not off yet, young varlet!—how's this, how's this?"

"Why it is—that during the hours of your sleep I have not been idle. Scarcely had I gone two miles from hence to reach a peasant's house, from whom I wanted assistance, than in the wood of Montajoue I heard a woman's voice apparently in distress, and rushing to the place, I found a party of desperadoes plundering a litter, and seizing the baggage mules of a lady, while some of the men were treating her with much rudeness and disrespect. Force could not avail me, but I flew up to him who appeared their leader, and I said, 'What! wasting your

time here on a few paltry clothes and jewels, maltreating a woman, who has doubtless relations that will avenge her cause,—when you might be at the rich plunder of the fortress and convent of Pietra Buona! See here, see what I have got already,’ showing them some gold; ‘but this is only a handful. Could you behold the piles of money and jewels that enrich the convent alone, you would not waste your hours here. Follow me, my brave fellows; give me only a fair share of the booty, and I will lead you where plunder is rich indeed. In token of the truth of what I tell you, take this,’ tossing my gold among them; ‘I can obtain plenty more.’ To make short my tale, for I have no time to waste on words, I persuaded these brigands to do my pleasure; I delivered the lady and her servants, whom I saw safely proceeding on their journey; and I come to bid you prepare for the reception of this lawless crew; they will supply the place of the men we

have lost. They will be here anon : look sharp after them, but keep them with you : wine and song must not be spared ;—they are desperadoes, but it is of such we shall require assistance ; and we can easily get rid of those who may survive the fray.”

“ Am I awake ? ” said De Baschi, rubbing his eye ; “ can I believe thee ? ”

“ See where they approach ! ” and effectively a band of horsemen came galloping along, but so much more numerous than the handful of men that Edoardo had treated with, that he could not believe his own senses.

On their arrival, the leader of this troop immediately singled out Edoardo. “ My gallant friend,” he said, “ I thank you for the service you rendered me ; you have saved me from the dishonour of being accused of plundering a defenceless lady, and prevented my having the stigma of a disgraceful outrage affixed to my name. Had these fellows not quarrelled about the division of gold you gave

them, I might never have heard the truth of this story: as it is, I come to thank you, and demand if there is any service by which I can repay your bravery, for it *was* bravery to parley unarmed and alone with such miscreants."

Edoardo waved his hand in token that this praise seemed to him oppressive, and modestly said, "I was fortunate this morning, and shall think myself still more so if you assist Signor De Baschi in recovering Pietra Buona from the usurping dominion of these Florentines, who are always by strength of gold domineering over their neighbours. In the meantime I crave your pardon for abruptly breaking off this conference, as I have a commission of some consequence to execute;" and he hastily withdrew.

Antonio began now to question the newly arrived captain, and asked him in his own blunt way who he was, and why he had taken the trouble and danger to head such a band of lawless ruffians as some of those who

were his followers appeared to be? He learnt that his name was Edward Hawkwood, his country England; that having lost a beloved brother in Italy, and being now the last of his race, he had come to forget, if possible, the sense of his melancholy loneliness in the din and bustle of war; that he had picked up the present band of mercenaries in different parts of Italy, and was going—he scarcely cared or knew whither—to join any army who might require his aid and would assist in paying his men's expenses; for they had become so numerous, he could no longer defray their charges himself; neither did he care to dismiss them, lest they should murder him.

While Antonio de Baschi and Hawkwood improved their acquaintance over a flask of wine, their men caroused together, and made the welkin ring with the rude sounds of soldiers' mirth. The night was chill, and they had made a large fire, round which they cowered, in various attitude and

garb. The red flames cast their reflection on the countenances of some, while others were obscured in deep shadow. Here the large Italian hat slouched over the shoulders, with its long wild feather waving in the wind: and there another stood unbonneted, with the yellow crisped hair and high cheek-bone, that marked him a child of the far north country, his belted plaid and filibeg displaying the brawny knee: and there the wise German lay, wrapt in his cloak, his pipe dispelling the unwholesome dews; his sharp small eye, and tight-compressed lip opening but to emit the volumed smoke, or quaff the passing cup: while the gay and supple Gaul excited the hilarity of all his comrades, and never laughed more heartily than when it was at his own expense. At length, seeing his stock of entertainment, in spite of all his efforts, coming to a low ebb, he proposed that every man should sing a song, or tell a story; "for we begin to grow dull, methinks," he said; "and it is care

that is ever our worst enemy ; swords and spears are nothing ; but *ennui*, oh ye Gods !—and then, *ma foi ! sans les dames* what is society ? *Allons, Messieurs, une chanson quelconque, une chanson à boire—L'amour, le vin, la gloire—vive la France ! vive la gaieté !*" Then turning to his neighbour, the German, "*Allons, mon ami, commencez ;* it is a long time since we have heard the sound of your voice." A cloud of smoke choked the Frenchman. "What a charming thing is politeness !" making a low bow, and then cutting a caper ; "but it is only in France that it can be found. *Allons, allons,* we are all going to sleep :—

Dormir c'est un temps perdu,
 Fault-il qu'on s'y livre ?
 Sommeil, prend ce qui t'est dû,
 Mais attend que je sois ivre.

Sleeping is our time to lose :
 Shall we be the slave of thee,
 Leaden God ?—no ! take thy dues,
 But when I'm drunk then let it be.

"*Ah quelle chanson délicieuse !* but I have forgot

the rest of it, 'tis a great pity—*ça a tant de grace*. Some day or other, when you come to the banks of the Loire, I will give you the rest:— and then there's another, *d'un autre genre—à faire pleurer, tenez, camarade,*" addressing the Scotchman, who understood not one word of what he was saying, but looked as if he did; and he recited with his hand on his heart—and *grasséyant à l'outrance*:—

Quoi! vous partez, sans que rien vous arrête;
 Vous allez plaire en de nouveaux climats :
 Pourquoi voler de conquêtes en conquêtes,—
 Nos cœurs soumis ne suffisèrent-ils pas?
 Jurons tous deux une amour des plus vives,
 Et livrons-nous au plaisir de s'aimer.
 Aimez-moi si vous voulez que je vive,
 Et je ne vivrais que pour vous aimer.

What! you depart, and no prayers can detain thee;
 In new climates to seek for new conquests you go;
 Our hearts all subdued can no longer enchain thee,
 No longer suffice thee—our tears then must flow.
 Swear we at least, though by fortune we're parted;
 Faithful to be, and for ever true-hearted.
 Love me—oh! love, if you wish me to live,
 And that life all to thee devoted I give.

“ *N'est-ce pas charmant?—ma foi! on parle de la musique Italienne,*—where can one hear music to equal the French? such *élans de voix*, such expression, such ornament!”

“ Weel I wat,” cried the Scotchman, taking a pinch of snuff from the horn which hung at his belt, and placing it in the hollow of his thumb,—“ weel I wat it sha’ na be said that a gentleman has dune his best for the enterteenment o’ the company, and no ane has lent him a helping hand.” Then inhaling the snuff with that calm delight which none but the worshippers of that herb can know, and wiping his nose carefully with the hare’s foot that pended to the silver chain of his mull, “ I’ll gie ye a sang that I made mine ain sel, anent the last skirmish we had wi’ thae Florentines;” and, bowing gravely to the Frenchman, he stood up, and in a voice that made even his rude auditors place their hands on their ears, he sang the words that follow:—

A mutchkin o' whisky, a bannock o' meal,
Potatoes and herrings, a sang and a reel ;
A gay sonsie lass, wi' a but an a ben,
Black cattle, a shelty, and loud-clacking hen.

Wha has thae, has the world—or, what's mair, has
 eneugh

To make a man happy, nor heed fortune's seugh ;
O war I ance mair in my ain native land,
I ne'er wud gang wandering wi' spear or wi' brand.

They talk o' their vines and their olives, gude Sirs,
I'd far rather see my grey muirs and dark firs,
My hills o' blue mist, while my biggin is nigh,
Ilka day for thae blessings I girn and I sigh.

What had I wi' the dangers o' glory to do ?
O sure I was wud, or, what's nigh it, was foo,
When I was inveigled my hame to forego,
And ow'r the saut seas wi' the Sassenagh to row.

Weel a weel, 'tis ow'r past, and my duty ordains,
Since my hand's to the wark, tho' my heart's sair wi' pains,
I should do the same fairly ; but ance it is done,
Gude luck til't, fast hame Johnie Fasyne will run.

And then for a mutchkin o' whisky, brave boys,
A mutchkin or stoup, for the liquor ne'er cloy,
Potatoes and herrings, a sang and a reel,
Wi' my gay sonsie lass, and her bannocks o' meal."

“Bravo!” cried the Italians, laughing long and loudly; “*ancora, ancora!*”

“Deil’s in thae chieles—do they think a man’s lungs are made o’ stane? let ony o’ them gie me a hilt o’ their ain, and then see how they wad like till begin it again without pause, or something to wat their throats wi’.” The German nodded, and handed him a flask. “Eh! Sirs! I’m aye feared to grasp thae kittle baskets wi’ my haunds; there is no sense in thae silly things.” But, nevertheless, he contrived to quaff off the contents.

The Scotchman now appealed to the German, and talked as earnestly as if his companion understood him; and so he did, for there is a language which is universal—the language of the heart.

“I am not gifted with the power of song,” replied the former, “but I have a story which may divert some of my hearers, and I am willing to tell it; the rest it will soothe to sleep, and

they have my leave to enjoy their nap." Having received the approbation of some, and the consent of all, he was about to commence, when the Scot put his hand on his lips, saying—

"It has just occurred to me that thae gentlemen, the Southernns, may deem it a slight, being in their own country, if they are not requested to gie us a specimen o' their twig malerums, and therefore, wi' your gude leave, my friend, let us prefer our demaund." And hereupon, by signs and bows, he made himself understood, and a young cavalier sang the following lay, his companions joining in chorus:—

OR DI BACCO SON SEGUACÈ.

Sound the lyre in mirthful strain,
Let music fill the air;
The nectar-draught of Bacchus drain,
Drink deep, and banish care.

In melting notes of softest measure,
Touch the silver-sounding wire;
And, Cupid, give, to crown all pleasure,
Some sparks of thy celestial fire.

Vain mortals, leave each busy care—
This is the hour of gay delight ;
Come, the Lethean goblet share,
And join to revel out the night.

Ah ! grasp the fleeting hours of joy,
Nor heed whate'er the world may say ;
Time will too soon each bliss destroy,
Then catch them ere it flies away.

Still crown thy days with full content,
Unmindful of the censuring throng ;
So shall thy life in joy be spent,—
All pleasures to content belong.

And see it sparkles in the bowl,
Whose purple juice each joy can give ;
Wine warms to mirth the frozen soul,
And drown'd in it, 'tis then we live.

When this song had received its share of praise, the German got up, and, in a slow measured voice, related his story: but it possessed the narcotic qualities he had foretold; and, except one or two of his countrymen, most of the others were asleep. Some few, however, of that part of the English captain's troop,

who had attempted to plunder the traveller in the morning, still owed a grudge to the boy (as they called him) who had prevented them from executing their crime; and they stood apart murmuring together, and denouncing threats against him. For, although he had given them more money than they would probably have procured by robbing the lady, it is the habit of depraved minds to prefer the ill-gotten wealth of rapine or of fraud to any lawful gain; just as it is more seducing to persons who accustom themselves to deceit, to attempt the end they accomplish by crooked and circuitous means, even though with less chance of success, rather than pursue the open straightforward path. These lawless men agreed to poison the minds of their companions against Edoardo: to this end they addressed themselves aloud to some of their troop, relating wonderful tales of evil spirits who had possessed themselves of certain persons, and made them perform the most extraordinary deeds:—"but

rob these people of the spell they carry concealed about their persons, and then you will see what will happen."

"I'll wager my best broad sword," said a soldier, "that this young scapegoat is one of them."

"We will strip him to the skin," said another, "and try."

"I'll toss him on my spear's point, and see how he'll dance the *tarentella*," said a third.

"No, no! throw him in a large fire to make a *frittura* of him."

"Throw him in the fire indeed!" rejoined the first speaker: "do you suppose the fire would hurt him? not in the least; it is his own proper element: that is not the way to get rid of him. Do you not remember when Alessandro was going to the stake at Salerno, how flames of fire came out of his nose, and burnt the spectators instead of burning him?"

"And well they might be expected to do so," exclaimed one of the other party, "in the present case. If any one of you dared to harm

a hair of his head, I would myself cut down the man who attempted to do him any injury, for he performed signal service to my poor bed-ridden mother; and he is going to lead us now to recover our wives and children, who are shut up and parted from us by those cunning proud Florentines. Viva Edoardo!" and a thousand voices echoed "Viva Edoardo!"

The other party still continued to consign him to the evil spirits, to whom, they said, he owed all his power; and as the wine-flask was more copiously drained, so their spirits grew more unmanageable, and the violence of their gesticulations and vociferations knew no bounds. The noise reached the ears of their captain, who suddenly appeared in the midst of them, demanding the cause of the tumult.

So strongly is the necessity of obedience to some superior governor impressed upon the least rational or humanized of beings, that even these ferocious men acknowledged its power, and in an instant their loud clamour was hushed.

“Who dares to utter a word against the brave young soldier?” demanded Hawkwood; “I insist upon knowing.” The delinquents continued silent.

“Edoardo will answer the accusation himself!” cried a voice that sounded from behind the assembled soldiers; and making his way through the circle, he stood before them. A murmur of surprise was heard—every eye was eagerly directed towards him.

“This coming night,” he said, “be ready to follow me—the place is ours.” Thus much he spoke to the multitude: then leading Hawkwood and Antonio de Baschi aside, “Listen,” he said, “and I will relate to you the success of my inquiries.”

END OF VOL. II.

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